



# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**ACEH CONFLICT RESOLUTION: LESSONS LEARNED  
AND THE FUTURE OF ACEH**

by

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June 2009

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**ACEH CONFLICT RESOLUTION: A LESSON LEARNED  
AND THE FUTURE OF ACEH**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Aceh conflict has been one of the longest running in Asia. When the memorandum of understanding between the Government of Indonesia (GoI) and GAM (Free Aceh Movement) was finally signed on August 15, 2005, in Helsinki, Finland. The agreement brought an end to the nearly thirty years of bloody armed conflict that claimed 15.000 lives, displaced tens of thousands and impacted the whole country economically, as well as politically. In the early process, many expressed their skepticism with the government in handling this conflict, due to the failure of previous two peace settlements. Many believed that GAM had to be eliminated by employing military operations. The military options, however, proved ineffective to eliminate rebellion. Instead, the military abuses and resource exploitation have only increased the GAM's public support. The Helsinki peace agreement appears to have a better chance to put an end to the separatist conflict in Aceh. This win-win solution settlement has so far worked well. However, lessons learned from this conflict will be beneficial for any government, and the military, in handling conflicts that might take us into the future. Indeed, instead of military options, Helsinki's peace agreement has always been the best solution for the future of Aceh.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. THESIS BACKGROUND

Many historians believe that Islam first came to Indonesia through Aceh, in northern Sumatra, around 700 AD.<sup>1</sup> In the early sixteenth century, Aceh played an important role in developing the prominent religion of Islam, and was the most powerful North Sumatran state. The first Aceh sultan was Ali Mughayat Syah, whose tombstone is dated 1530.<sup>2</sup> One of Aceh's greatest sultans was Sultan Alaudin Riayat Syah al-Kahar. Under his administration, Aceh progressed both commercially and ideologically. In economics, Aceh was the Southeast Asian trading hub, and the Acehnese depicted their land as the "Serambi Mekkah" (the verandah of Mecca) of Southeast Asia.<sup>3</sup> The importance of local commodities such as pepper, nutmeg and clove in world trade created fierce local competition for the Portuguese who controlled the Malacca Strait.

The history of the Aceh conflict began in the sixteenth century when the sultanate of Aceh contested the Portuguese domination over the international pepper trade. Three centuries later, the Acehnese fought with the Dutch, who were the primary colonists. The conflict continued then with the Acehnese against the Indonesian central government, and lasted almost three decades. After WWII, the first rebellion in Aceh took place in 1953 when Daud Beureuh and his followers declared the Aceh region a part of *Negara Islam Indonesia* (NII, Indonesia Islamic State of Indonesia) in August 1949. Daud Beureuh's armed wing began attacks on government offices and security posts and seized weapons.<sup>4</sup> The clashes ended in 1962 and the Indonesian government granted a special status for the

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<sup>1</sup> Florence Lamoureux, *Indonesia: a global studies handbook* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2003), 69.

<sup>2</sup> M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c.1300* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 6.

<sup>3</sup> Anthony Reid, "Pre-modern Sultanate's View of its Place in the World," in *Veranda of Violence*, ed. by Anthony Reid, (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006), 56.

<sup>4</sup> M. Isa Sulaiman, "From Autonomy to Periphery: A Critical Evaluation of the Acehnese Nationalist Movement," in *Verandah of Violence*, ed. by Anthony Reid, (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006), 130.

Aceh Province. However, after natural gas resources were discovered in 1971, the rebellion resurfaced under the name the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). This time the conflict was triggered by both political and economic factors and lasted much longer.

Between 1970 and the early 2000s, the Indonesian government tried to put an end to the rebellion by utilizing various policies. However, its efforts to put GAM down relied heavily on military options, and these generated human right abuses. Initially, military operations suppressed the rebellion, but over time, GAM gained support from both inside and outside the country, including weapons and training. Hundreds of GAM members enjoyed military training in Libya.<sup>5</sup> When the Indonesian government declared Aceh a military operation zone (Indonesian acronym DOM) in the late 1980s, the Indonesian military fought GAM with COIN (counter-insurgency) strategies. Although military actions managed to reduce GAM's strength significantly, the negative impact of the military approach also had political consequences. The Indonesian military was frequently linked to allegations of a series of human right violations such as murder, torture, and abduction that made the situation even worse.<sup>6</sup>

The post-Soeharto government, under President Habibie (1998–1999) used a different approach. He admitted the mistakes of the past and promised to give greater autonomy to Aceh. President Wahid (1999–2001) initiated peace talks with GAM that were mediated by the Henry Dunant Center (HDC). His successor, President Megawati, granted a special autonomy status to the Aceh province in 2001 and continued negotiations with GAM. However, when the peace talks failed in 2003, the Indonesian government responded by imposing, again, a military strategy known as an “integrated operation,” and then declared Aceh a military emergency zone. This operation also failed

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<sup>5</sup> Sulaiman, “From Autonomy to Periphery,” 138.

<sup>6</sup> ICG Report No. 18, *Aceh: Can Autonomy Stem the Conflict?* (Jakarta/Brussels: International Crisis Group, June 27, 2001), 16.

to destroy GAM; although the military was able to reduce GAM's fighting capacity. However, the government failed to force GAM to accept autonomy and the armed rebellion continued.<sup>7</sup>

On August 15, 2005, in Helsinki, Finland, representatives from GAM and the government of Indonesia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) stating that the conflict had been concluded. Since then, GAM has transformed itself from an armed insurgency group into a political movement, and its struggle began to pay off when Irwandi Yusuf, a former GAM leader, became Governor of Aceh after he won the local elections. On February 8, 2007, Irwandi and Muhammad Nazar officially took the oaths as governor and vice-governor of Aceh province and pledged their allegiance to the Republic of Indonesia. However, after four years of peace, the government of Indonesia (GoI) and especially the military, still face factors that could disrupt the peace process due to the nature of the conflict being deep rooted and multi-faceted.

## **B. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how the government of Indonesia resolved its internal conflicts by using military and political approaches. This thesis will focus on the role of the GoI and the security forces, especially the Indonesian military, in handling a longstanding secessionist movement in Aceh Province. In doing so, I will explore the historical background of the Aceh conflict to discover the root causes of the conflict, and analyze the shortcomings of military and political strategies in combating Aceh separatists. The paper will thus draw some lessons from this conflict, and it will be useful for the Indonesian Military (TNI) for counter-insurgency efforts with a view to generating appropriate responses from other separatist movements within Indonesia.

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<sup>7</sup> Kirsten E. Schulze, "Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency: Strategy and the Aceh Conflict, October 1976–May 2004," in *Verandah of Violence*, ed. by Anthony Reid (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006), 265.

## C. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Conceptual Literature

#### a. *McCormick's Model*

A good model for understanding counter-insurgency (COIN) is the Diamond model, or “Mystic diamond,” developed by Dr. Gordon McCormick, the head of the Defense Analysis Department at the Naval Postgraduate School. From this simple model, I will discuss the ineffectiveness of the military operations that were launched by the Indonesian authority. The McCormick Diamond model provides explanations on how governments should resolve their internal armed conflicts. I will offer a broad understanding on how a counter-insurgency strategy should be carried out by using this model. There are interactions between the government, the insurgents, the population, and international actors. I will demonstrate a situation where the Indonesian government competes with GAM to win the hearts and minds of the Aceh population.

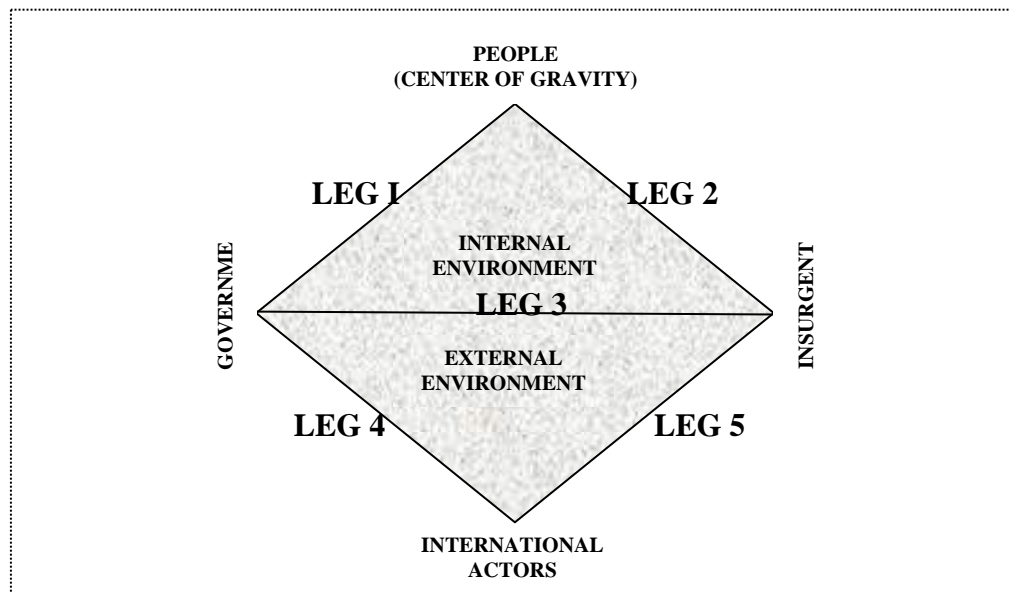


Figure 1. Diamond Model<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See Eric P. Wendt, “Strategy Counterinsurgency Modeling,” *Special Warfare*, (2005), 6.

In Figure 1, we can see that the upper part of the model depicts the internal environment. People are placed on top of the diamond model; this means that the government and GAM target the same center of gravity—the popular support of the Acehnese. The battle is to contest the legitimacy of control over the population (as shown on leg 1 and leg 2). Therefore, the government has to cut GAM off from its popular support and win by isolating, capturing, and killing the GAM leaders. At the same time, the government has to provide security and the fulfillment of the people's needs to reduce GAM's influence over the population. By destroying the GAM infrastructure, the government can use its own force advantages, the military and police. On the other hand, GAM, as argued by McCormick's theory, also has information advantages; they can blend into the population and locate the government forces. In some cases, GAM attacked the security forces in Aceh, but it was not easy for the government forces to reach the GAM positions.

When the Indonesian government employed its COIN strategy, it was clear that the military paid less attention to legs 1 and 2, and tended to attack GAM directly, measuring success by the number of enemy killed as well as by how many of GAM's weapons were confiscated (as shown on leg 3). The lower part of McCormick's Diamond model describes the external environment. In the case of the Aceh conflict where GAM obtained additional weapons and training from the outside, the government had to hamper the flow of financing and supply for the insurgents, and without the support from the outside, GAM could not win the battle (leg 5). Similarly, the government needed support from the neighboring countries in order to gain some legitimacy from external actors (leg 4). In Chapter III, McCormick's model will be used to analyze the GoI/TNI missteps in Aceh.

#### ***b. Constructive Conflict Resolution***

A study dealing with conflict resolution written by Louis Kriesberg will be a second framework used in this thesis. It will help to provide broad understanding in analyzing the emergence of conflict, escalation and negotiation in settling the conflict. I

will discuss in Chapter IV the Kriesberg conflict and components that affect the degree of destructiveness, such as identity, grievance, goals, and methods and conclude that the Aceh conflict tended to be more constructive over time.

Also in Chapter IV, I will focus on the process fostering de-escalation between GAM and the government of Indonesia. In this conflict, both GAM and GoI realized that they needed to put an end to the conflict (de-escalation). The Indonesian military could not defeat GAM militarily because human rights abuses by the security forces (negative impact of using military forces) further alienated the ordinary Acehnese. Since GAM could not defeat the Indonesian forces either, and given that there was no international support for Acehnese independence, the autonomy plan is the only alternative at the time that would put an end to the prolonged conflict.

According to Kriesberg, each party tries to change the conflict for the mutual beneficial outcome or to achieve a “win-win” solution. He discusses two processes in creating conflict de-escalation. First is what he calls the “social psychological process” that is illustrated by generating sympathy and empathy from the internal communities. These events subsequently prompted both parties to de-escalate the conflict. After violence escalated in 1999–2000, it was halted temporarily by negotiations between GAM and the government, brokered by the Henri Dunant Centre, a Geneva-based organization. The peace negotiation broke down shortly after the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA) was signed in December 2002. The government responded by declaring a military emergency, which was downgraded to a civilian emergency in May 2004. When the Tsunami hit in December 2004, it caused hundreds of thousands of death in Aceh, destroyed most of GAM’s infrastructures, and led to the flowing of outside aid organization for Aceh. This caused GAM to propose a unilateral ceasefire.

Second is the process of involvement where other parties can also contribute to de-escalation. International organizations such as the Henri Dunant Centre, and the Crisis Management Initiative, along with prominent international leaders have been good mediators for peace processes in the Aceh conflict. Former Finnish president

Martti Ahtisaari led an NGO and the Crisis Management Initiative and mediated the Helsinki peace talks on Aceh. The peace agreement between GAM and the government was finally signed in August 2005. Indeed, in order to manage conflict effectively, the government and GAM must develop policies that are responsive to the phase and nature of the conflict, the conflict situation, and the change of external conditions. Minimizing violence and using nonviolent strategy is generally an effective course of action for making conflicts constructive. GAM and the Indonesian Government realize that they cannot go on as they have, and that compromise and cooperation guarantee a better future.

## **2. Empirical Literature**

My thesis will mostly be based upon a qualitative method of evaluating the performance of the GoI in general, and the Indonesian military, in particular, in combating GAM, but I shall be using some of the facts and figures provided by reports either from the Indonesian Military or other institutions. I will also use newspaper articles, journal articles and various books. It is important to include the personal insights of high ranking military officers and local government figures (such as Aceh's regional military commander and the governor of Aceh) as well as some international NGO figures, scholars and ordinary Acehnese people. Therefore, between April 17 and March 7, 2009, I travelled to Indonesia to attend an international conference in Banda Aceh, and interviewed the key figures of the Aceh conflict in Aceh and Jakarta in order to get a wider and deeper understanding about the Aceh problems in the past, the present, and in the future. The direct research study in Aceh will also be beneficial for measuring the success of the peace agreement that was signed on August 15, 2005.

## **D. CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Chapter II (*Historical Background*) begins with a brief discussion of when Aceh was under the reign of the sultanates when it was widely known as a center of commercial, culture and Islam on the Malay Peninsula in the early seventeenth century. The Acehnese also have a proud history of resisting Dutch domination. Nevertheless,

there is a paradox to our understanding of the following rebellions. Aceh initially supported the newly established republic, but became strongly opposed the central government.

Chapter III (*Military Approaches*) provides an analysis on whether or not the Counter-insurgency (COIN) strategy worked in settling the Aceh conflict. I will use McCormick's Diamond Model as a tool to assess the success and failure, as well as consequences in the COIN operations, which depended heavily upon military options and lacked non-military approaches.

In Chapter IV (*Political Approaches*), the analysis will use Kriesberg's study on conflict resolution to examine how the conflict in Aceh escalated, and how the GoI handled the situation to de-escalate the conflict through a series of negotiations following its unsuccessful military operations and peace talks. GAM and the GoI finally managed to conclude a peace agreement in 2005.

As a final point, in Chapter V (*Conclusion and Recommendation*) the findings are summarized. Although peaceful settlement has worked well so far, factors that could hamper the peace processes remain due to the nature of the conflict in Aceh. The distrust between GAM and the military can potentially spark greater clashes in the future. To prevent this from happening, I will provide recommendations for both parties to maintain peace in Aceh.



## II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ACEH CONFLICT



Figure 2. Map of Aceh<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Map is taken from ICG, *Asia Briefing No. 61 Indonesia: How GAM Won in Aceh* (Jakarta/Brussels: International Crisis Group, March 22, 2007), 14.

## A. INTRODUCTION

Before the armed rebels began attacking the soldiers of the government of Indonesia in 1989, rebellion and violence had routinely taken place in Aceh's history. Aceh experienced its 'golden age' when Sultan Iskandar Muda came to power (1607–1636). During his reign, the Aceh sultanate achieved its largest territorial reach; it was the most powerful state in the region and became known as an international center of Islamic commerce and education. In the colonial era, Aceh was famous for its long war against the Dutch at the end of nineteenth century. After the independence of Indonesia in 1945, the Acehnese also struggled for their identity and interests against the newly established government of Indonesia. The first Acehnese rebellion against the GoI was inspired by the Darul Islam movement in 1953. The Acehnese did not seek independence or a greater profit sharing of natural resources revenue as they later demanded, but mainly called for a greater autonomy and more of an Islamic role in the government. At that time, the rebellion was not under the banner of *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (GAM, Free Aceh Movement). It was not until 1971 that GAM emerged after massive oil and gas reserves were discovered in Aceh province. Some scholars believe that these natural resources contributed to the duration of the Aceh conflict.<sup>10</sup> To understand the Aceh rebellion, this chapter seeks to explain the principal cause of the rebellion in two parts, namely early history, in which the Acehnese clashed with Portuguese, and middle history as defined by the struggle against the Dutch. Therefore, in the first part of this chapter, I will explore the history of Aceh in the period of the sultanates in the early sixteenth century when the Acehnese fought with the Portuguese over the great trading city of Malacca on the Malay Peninsula in 1511.

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<sup>10</sup> Michael L. Ross, "What do We Know about Natural Resources and Civil War?" *Journal of Peace Research*, (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2004), 343. In his article, Ross gives a list of nations where natural resources have indirect connections to the duration of the conflict. Secessionist wars tend to last much longer than other types of internal conflicts.

## **B. PRE-COLONIAL TO INDEPENDENCE (1524–1945)**

### **1. The Emergence of the Acehnese (1524)**

In the early fifteenth century, Europe was not the most highly developed area of the world, nor was it the most vibrant. As Ricklefs argues, the greatest player in the world was Islam, which was reaching Indonesia and the Philippines after the Ottoman Turks occupied Constantinople, the imperial capital of the Roman Empire in 1453.<sup>11</sup> Islam was the predominant religion in Aceh since the thirteenth century, brought by Muslim merchants from the Middle East and India before the appearance of Europeans in this region. In the fourteenth century, Lhokseumawe in North Aceh was a port of the Pasai Kingdom and an important center of trade and Islamic education.<sup>12</sup> The Portuguese, on the other hand, made technological advances through the development of geography and astronomy making them the greatest navigators of all time. They built durable, larger and faster ships that were strong enough to carry heavy guns and that allowed them to challenge Muslim domination.<sup>13</sup> The Portuguese also had economical motives, such as searching for spices, one of the most highly sought commodities anywhere in the world. For that reason, the Portuguese began attempting to find the “Spice Islands.”<sup>14</sup> The northern coast of Aceh was recognized as the largest producer of pepper when Alfonso de Albuquerque (1459–1415), a general officer and Portuguese nobleman, conquered the Malacca Strait in 1511.

The Acehnese Sultan, Ali Mughayat Shah (1514–1530) challenged the Portuguese domination and declared Aceh an independent state that controlled the trading hub in the peninsula.<sup>15</sup> With the support from the local population, Mughayat Shah defeated a

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<sup>11</sup> Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 22.

<sup>12</sup> Anthony Reid, *The Contest of North Sumatra; Atjeh, the Netherlands, and Britain, 1858–1898* (Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Oxford University Press, University of Malaya Press, 1969), 1.

<sup>13</sup> Jeremy Black, *Cambridge Illustrated Atlas, Warfare: Renaissance to Revolution, 1492–1792* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), 15.

<sup>14</sup> Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 23.

<sup>15</sup> Tim Kell, *The Root of Acehnese Rebellion 1989–1992* (New York: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1995), 33.

Portuguese fleet at sea, and at the same time, conquered Pidie and Pasai in 1524 after conquering Deli.<sup>16</sup> This period marked the integration of the conquered areas into the Aceh Besar (Greater Aceh) region and the people became acculturated as Acehnese.<sup>17</sup> The Aceh Kingdom also expanded its territory during the administration of Sultan Ala'ad-din Riayat Shah al-Kahar (1537–1571), and Aceh remained the powerful military force in the Malacca Strait.<sup>18</sup> Kahar was the second of Aceh's greatest sultans, and its territory expanded to Aru (known today as Deli, North Sumatra)<sup>19</sup> and Pariaman before subsequently declining in power on the west coast up to Barus (present day North Sumatra).<sup>20</sup> Aceh reached its "golden age" during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607–1636) and made Aceh the most influential state that controlled the Malacca Strait.<sup>21</sup> His achievements were largely based on remarkable military power. Iskandar's power reached as far as Deli, Inderapura, and claimed most of the important ports as far south as Asahan [North Sumatra]. He also conquered Pahang, Johor, Kedah, and Perak on the Malay Peninsula as well as Nias in the 1620s.<sup>22</sup> Aceh in this period was identified not only as a major center of Islamic learning and trade, but it was also recognized as an Islamic state.<sup>23</sup> And yet it did not last long as the power of Sultan Iskandar Muda suffered a decline after the Portuguese destroyed hundreds of his ships and some 19,000 of his men in 1629.<sup>24</sup> The decline was also due to internal conflicts such as the

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<sup>16</sup> Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 33.

<sup>17</sup> Reid, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 33.

<sup>19</sup> A. C. Milner, E. Edwards McKinnon, and Tengku Luckman Sinar, *A Note on Aru Kota Cina* (Southeast Asia Program Publication at Cornell University, 1978), 5.

<sup>20</sup> Kell, *The Root*, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 34; Tim Kell, *The Root of Acehnese Rebellion 1989–1992* (New York: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1995), 5.

<sup>22</sup> Kell, *The Root*, 4.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 34.

movements of *uleebalang* against the Iskandar's oppressive measures, and the competition between the Dutch and the British colonial powers over Aceh's abundant natural resources.<sup>25</sup>

In 1641, the Dutch gained control of the Malay Peninsula and as a result, the influence of the Aceh sultanate was undermined in terms of its economic and political power. The sultanate authority was subsequently limited to approximately those areas that the province covers today. In 1666 and 1667, the Dutch managed to take over Malacca and put an end to the Aceh sultanate's control of the region. The downfall of the Sultan of Aceh led to the reduction of its territory, and from then on he only controlled Banda Aceh and its ports. The demise of Iskandar led to a change in the political patterns of Aceh. Iskandar then gave an opportunity to the *uleebalang* to control the trade in their respective territory and remain politically independent from the sultanate. Reid suggests that *uleebalang* in this period had dual functions as both war leaders and territorial chiefs who were rewarded with grants of land in the area conquered by the sultans.<sup>26</sup> At the end of seventeenth century the sultanate became a weak symbolic institution after Aceh entered long episode of internal disunion.<sup>27</sup>

## **2. The Impact of the London Treaty (1824)**

Acehnese power began to decline in the seventeenth century, and the great European powers, the Dutch and the British, fought for control.<sup>28</sup> The 1819 treaty was the negotiation between the sultanate and the British, and as a result, the British obtained exclusive commercial privileges with the Acehnese.<sup>29</sup> The British promised to support the sultanate militarily, and the sultanate agreed to make no foreign alliances without

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<sup>25</sup> Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 35.

<sup>26</sup> Antony Reid, *An Indonesian Frontier: Acehnese and Other History of Sumatra* (Singapore, Singapore University Press, 2005), 142.

<sup>27</sup> Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 36.

<sup>28</sup> Anthony Reid, "Economic and Social Change c. 1400–1800," in *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, ed. by Nicholas Tarling, (Cambridge, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1999), 143.

<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth F. Drexler, *Aceh, Indonesia: Securing the Insecure State* (Philadelphia, University of Philadelphia Press, 2008 ), 58.

British approval<sup>30</sup>. The next treaty, the London treaty of 1824, also known as the Anglo-Dutch Treaty, created the states of Malaysia and Indonesia by partitioning the sphere of interest between the Dutch and British along the Straits of Singapore and Malacca.<sup>31</sup> The 1824 treaty was not only designed to resolve some issues regarding the Napoleonic war (1803–1805) in Europe, but also to guarantee that the British would continue to trade in the Malay Peninsula.<sup>32</sup> An article of the 1824 treaty also stated that the two powers recognized the independence of Aceh.<sup>33</sup> The agreement authorized the Dutch to gain full control of Sumatra. Although the treaty marked the end of the British permanent presence in Aceh, the commercial relations with the sultanate of Aceh was continued, and in fact, the trading expanded to British areas of influence such as Penang, Thailand and Burma.<sup>34</sup>

By the 1820s, Aceh contributed over half of the world's pepper production. The pepper production continued to grow when Aceh was under Sultan Muhammad Syah (1823–38) and the production increased 13 million pounds (5,800 tons) in 1839 due to the opening of new plantations in some regions of Aceh.<sup>35</sup> In addition, the sultanate of Aceh under Sultan Ali Ala'ad-din Mansyur Syah (1838–70) remained powerful and enjoyed impressive economic development, which forced the Dutch to continue to respect Aceh as an independent state. However, the fierce rivalries between *uleebalang* and the sultanate led the Acehnese sultan to grant trading rights, land, and a degree of autonomy to the *uleebalang*, especially for those who were loyal to the ruler, to increase pepper production.<sup>36</sup> The booming pepper production drew pepper traders from Europe and America, but the benefit went to the local *uleebalang*, who controlled particular

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<sup>30</sup> Reid, 96.

<sup>31</sup> Lee Kam Hing, "Aceh at the Time of the 1824 Treaty," in *Verandah of Violence* ed. by Anthony Reid, (Singapore, University of Singapore, 2006), 89.

<sup>32</sup> Keat Gin Ooi, *Southeast Asia: A Historical Encyclopedia from Angkor Wat to East Timor* (Santa Barbara, ABC-CLIO, 2004), 871.

<sup>33</sup> Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 143.

<sup>34</sup> Reid, 90.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

ports, and the profit did not go to the sultan. The pepper wealth generated powerful and independent-minded *uleebalang*, and as a result, the sultan's power became less important in commercial and political affairs.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the establishment of Singapore, due to the 1824 treaty, led to an economic downturn for the Aceh sultanate, as the British was now served by Singapore, and this made Aceh less important for British strategic and commercial interests in the region.<sup>38</sup> In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the world pepper price and production gradually declined due to soil exhaustion and the weakening Aceh economy in general.<sup>39</sup> In the 1819 treaty, the British agreed to protect Aceh militarily, and in the 1824 treaty, they recognized the independence of Aceh, but then the policy changed. The British no longer considered Aceh's independence to be feasible, and finally let the Dutch have Aceh. The Dutch were subsequently involved in the Aceh War of 1873.

### **3. The Dutch Colonialism (1873–1942)**

#### ***a. The Dutch-Aceh War (1873–1903)***

On March 26, 1873, Dutch fleets began an attack on Banda Aceh and this marked the beginning of Aceh's war against the Dutch. The Dutch forces were comprised of some 3,000 strong under the leadership of Maj. Gen. J.H.R. Kohler. The Dutch suffered many casualties and even the commander himself, Kohler, was killed.<sup>40</sup> The first attacks failed to gain their strategic objective; instead, the Dutch suffered defeat at the hands of the Acehnese.<sup>41</sup> The second attack, which took place in November 1873, was led by Lieutenant General J. Van Swieten, with a larger number of troops, some 13,000, who stormed the sultanate and seized Sultan Mahmud Syah (1870–74) and ended

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<sup>37</sup> Hing, "Aceh at the Time of the 1824 Treaty," 73.

<sup>38</sup> Hing, "Aceh at the Time of the 1824 Treaty," 92.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>40</sup> Teuku Ibrahim Alfian, "Aceh and the Holy War (Prang Sabil)," in *Verandah of Violence* ed by Anthony Reid.(Singapore, University of Singapore,2006), 111.

<sup>41</sup> Anthony Reid, "Colonial Transformation: a Bitter Legacy," in *Verandah of Violence* ed by Anthony Reid.(Singapore, University of Singapore,2006), 97.

the succession of the last of Aceh's sultanate dynasty.<sup>42</sup> The Acehnese, however, were ready to defend their land and the Dutch's military operation to capture Aceh became the longest and bloodiest colonial campaign. The Dutch suffered many casualties over time due to combat and non-combat causes, such as cholera and other diseases. This bad situation forced the Dutch to conclude with a treaty to finalize their dominance, which was impossible, as the sultanate had been abolished when the Dutch claimed victory over Aceh in January 1874.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, the Dutch lost some 7,000 of their troops by the end of 1878. According some estimates, the Dutch-Aceh War lasted for more than 30 years (until 1914) and claimed no less than 17,500 on the Dutch side, and around 70,000 lives on Aceh's side.<sup>44</sup> When Sultan Mahmud died of cholera, Tuanku Muhammad Daud Syah was declared by the Acehnese to be Sultan Ibrahim Mansyur Syah (1875–1907). The Acehnese refused to give up. After recognizing the tough Acehnese resistance, the Dutch ultimately announced that the war was over in 1881. This made the Aceh resistance Southeast Asia's first successful guerilla strategy against any European power.<sup>45</sup>

Ironically, the relationship of the *uleebalang* with external forces during the Dutch-Aceh War grew more cooperative in order to safeguard its own commercial interests. While the commercial activities in this region were growing, the seeds of disunity among the Acehnese became apparent since the *uleebalang* themselves were divided by political and economic rivalry. For this reason the *uleebalang* could not provide the unity necessary for resistance to the Dutch. This situation led to the emergence of the *ulama* (clerics) to lead the struggle against the Dutch and galvanize anti-colonial sentiment among the society. Tengku Sheik Saman di Tiro, a charismatic religious leader of Pidie emerged in this period (1836–91). He inspired the guerilla resistance by popularizing an Acehnese epic poem, *Hikayat Perang Sabil* (The Epic of the Holy War), an important religious-based struggle that turned the battle into a holy war

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<sup>42</sup> Hing, "Aceh at the Time of the 1824 Treaty," 72.

<sup>43</sup> Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 145.

<sup>44</sup> Alfian, "Aceh and the Holy War," 111.

<sup>45</sup> Reid, 99; Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 145.



for the faith.<sup>46</sup> In this period, *Ulama* gained an important position during the Dutch occupation, since the escalating *uleebalang*'s dependence on the Dutch, and subsequently increased alienation from the Aceh society.

By the 1890s, Aceh was no longer an important commercial hub of the Malay Peninsula. The situation deteriorated after the death of Tengku Sheikh Saman di Tiro in 1891 and led to the gradual conquest of Aceh by the Dutch. The presence of Dr. Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936), the most prominent Dutch scholar of Islam, and Joannes Benedictus van Heutsz (1851–1924) deteriorated the Aceh position. Both advised the colonial government on Islamic matters to undertake a costly policy to crush the fanatical resistance of the *ulama* by relying upon the *uleebalang* who were seen as secular chiefs.<sup>47</sup> This strategy made the resistance of the Acehnese recede drastically when the death toll of the Acehnese reached 20,000 within ten years.<sup>48</sup> The last Aceh sultan, Muhammad Daud Syah, surrendered in 1903, and showed that the Aceh conquest had been achieved by the Dutch.<sup>49</sup> But it was not until 1910 that the Dutch were ultimately able to integrate Aceh into the Dutch East Indies.<sup>50</sup> Up until 1913, the *ulama*-led guerilla remained tough. All Tengku di Tiro's seven sons were killed, including Tengku Mahyuddin, the grandfather of Hasan Tiro, the leader of the latter Free Aceh Movement (GAM).<sup>51</sup> The Dutch had crushed the resistance and installed an administration headed by the *uleebalang*.<sup>52</sup> However, the Acehnese resistance was never completely put down until Indonesia declared independence in 1945. Afterward, the only region the Dutch did not want to re-enter was Aceh.<sup>53</sup> The absence of the Dutch led to

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<sup>46</sup> Reid, 99.

<sup>47</sup> Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 188.

<sup>48</sup> Reid, 101.

<sup>49</sup> Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 282.

<sup>50</sup> Edward Aspinall, "Sovereignty, The Successor State, and Universal Human Rights: History and the Internasional Structuring of Acehnese Nationalism," *Indonesia* 73, (Southeast Asia Program Publications at Cornell Univesity, 2002), 3.

<sup>51</sup> Reid, 101.

<sup>52</sup> R. B. Cribb and Audrey Kahin, *Historical dictionary of Indonesia* (Lanham, Scarecrow Press, 2004), 4.

<sup>53</sup> Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 146.

the assassination and imprisonment of the prominent *uleebalang* by pro-independence forces led by the religious leaders, generating a new social structure based upon Islamic values under the leadership of *ulama*.<sup>54</sup>

**b.       *The Japanese Occupation (1942–45)***

Weeks before the Japanese arrived in Aceh on February 19, 1942, and knowing that they were about to come, the *ulama* took the lead to organize a general revolt against the Dutch. Enthusiastically greeting the Japanese, and in the hopes of driving the Dutch out of Aceh, many PUSA *ulama* (All Aceh Ulama Association) supported the Japanese invasion.<sup>55</sup> In the final years of the Dutch occupation, the violence escalated between the *uleebalang* and the Acehnese-backed *ulama*. When Aceh was under the Dutch administration, the Dutch successfully implemented the well-known tactic of *divide et impera* (divide and rule) to break the Acehnese ruling class into two groups, the *ulama* and the *uleebalang*. Under the Japanese occupation however, the *ulama* enjoyed a strong position due to the creation of religious courts and they separated the *ulama* from the influence of the *uleebalang*. This policy indirectly recognized Islamic law, and contributed to the strengthening of the authority of the *ulama*.<sup>56</sup>

The Japanese invasion marked one of the most important events of Indonesian history, as before the invasion, no serious confrontations with the Dutch had emerged. There were so many significant changes under the Japanese that led to the Indonesian revolution, that in fact, under the *ulama* leadership, Islamic-based education such as *madrasah* (Islamic school) developed significantly. PUSA was established in this period (1939), and the first chairman of this organization was one of the most prominent religious figures, Daud Beureuh of Pidie. All the revolutionary movements, therefore, gradually integrated themselves into PUSA, transforming it into a political

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<sup>54</sup> Theodore Friend, *Indonesian Destinies* (Cambridge, Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2003), 269.

<sup>55</sup> Jacques Bertrand, *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 164.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

organization.<sup>57</sup> The Japanese made the revolution possible by recruiting, indoctrinating, arming, and training the younger generation in *Giyugun* military units.<sup>58</sup> These actions stimulated nationalism among the society, and as a consequence, the Dutch became the target of looting and personal violence and even deadly attacks. After defeating the Dutch and taking over the administration, the Japanese continued to use *uleebalang*, as the Dutch previously had, to run the government, and as a consequence, increased hatred toward *uleebalang*.

The sudden collapse of the Japanese in 1945 drew the youth movements to join the struggle for Indonesian independence. In October 1945, the older *ulama* supported their struggle by signing the so-called “Declaration of *Ulama* throughout Aceh,” and four prominent *ulama* signed the declaration including Daud Beureuh. He himself pronounced the struggle to be a “holy war.” Anthony Reid depicted Daud Beureuh as the first of the prominent religious leaders to speak up for the Republic.<sup>59</sup> The emergence of the nationalism seeds, however, did not come from the new republican leaders, but from a coalition of PUSA *ulama*, the *madrasah*-educated youths, and subsequently transformed them into social revolutionaries to challenge the *uleebalang*. They formed a militia and declared a social revolution that was popularly known as *Perang Cumbok*” (Cumbok War) to eradicate the *uleebalang* and confiscate their property.<sup>60</sup> As a result, hundreds of *uleebalang* lost their lives in the battle for government control. The *uleebalang* were finally eliminated in 1946, and the PUSA *ulama* and the forces associated with them took control of Aceh. The vacant positions that had been held by the *uleebalang* in the past were filled by the PUSA leaders and made Daud Beureuh a military governor on August 26, 1947, under the direction of Vice-President Muhammad Hatta.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Kell, *The Root*, 9.

<sup>58</sup> David Brown, *The State and Ethnic Politic in Southeast Asia* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 95.

<sup>59</sup> Kell, *The Root*, 9.

<sup>60</sup> Jacqueline Aquino Siapno, *Gender, Islam, Nationalism and the State in Aceh: The Paradox of Power, Co-optation and Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 159.

<sup>61</sup> Sulaiman, “From Autonomy to Periphery,” 128.

## C. THE REBELLIONS

### 1. Introduction

Some scholars attempted to find out the causes of the emergence of the Acehese nationalist movement, Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM, or Free Aceh Movement), led by Hasan Tiro. The government was unable to suppress GAM permanently; GAM had the ability to make a comeback at a later date. Many believed that the secessionist movement that began in October 1976 was the result of several causes such as the exploitation of Aceh's natural resources, the brutal military actions, as well as the imposition of various unjust policies toward Aceh that led to the alienation of the Acehese by the Republic. Why did the Acehese, who since the revolutionary era had stood firm behind the new Republic and shared ideals and values to mobilize the population against the Dutch now rebel against the Republican government? The transformation of the Acehese preference from a strong proponent of Indonesia to its most rebellious entity needs an explanation.

Daud Beureuh declared the revolt in September 1953, and demanded that all Muslims work to establish a government based on Syariah law (Islamic law) following the bloody social revolution to overthrow the political power of *uleebalang*. Some believed that the emergence of GAM was linked to the first revolt. This was understandable since the initial leaders of the first GAM rebellion were former Darul Islam (DI) figures. There was, however, one main difference between the Darul Islam movement and GAM in terms of their goals. To address this issue and understand the differences between the two, I will discuss the emergence of the first rebellion that was inspired by the Darul Islam movement. Darul Islam leaders justified violence primarily in terms of the obligation for all Muslims to create a government based on God's law and demanded that the Indonesian state be based on Islamic law.<sup>62</sup> Unlike the Darul Islam

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<sup>62</sup> Edward Aspinall, "Violence and Identity Formation in Aceh under Indonesia Rule," in *Verandah of Violence*, ed. by Antony Reid. (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006), 153.

rebellion, GAM was obviously pro-independence in nature, secular, and demanded separation from the Republic of Indonesia.<sup>63</sup>

## **2. The Darul Islam Rebellion (1953–1962)**

The incorporation of Aceh into the Indonesian Republic demonstrated the significant loyalty of Acehnese leaders to the concept of the Indonesian state. The combination of an exclusive sense of unity of Aceh's glorious past as a regional power, their never-give-up attitude to the Dutch, and their strong Islamic identity, brought them into the new Republic. Acehnese elites and the population struggled against the Dutch through social revolution, and shared their common values and ideals to support the Indonesian nationalist movement, which took place throughout almost the entire country. They also showed their strong position when the Dutch returned and fought against the new Republic in 1947–1948. The Acehnese consolidated their resources and became one of the Republic's strongholds.<sup>64</sup> When the Dutch subsequently regained control of the main cities in Java, they did not return to Aceh.<sup>65</sup> Under the PUSA administration, Aceh refused the Dutch offer to establish Aceh as a state in a Dutch-led federal system. At that time, Aceh enjoyed a relatively healthy financial condition due to the export of various commodities such as pepper, rubber, tea and coffee to the neighboring countries.<sup>66</sup> When President Soekarno visited Aceh on June 17, 1948, Aceh provided two airplanes to the Republic, and named *Seulawah* RI 01 and *Seulawah* RI 02. In addition, Aceh also contributed a sum of money for supporting Indonesian diplomats in their efforts to persuade the international public to recognize the existence of the newly-formed Republic.<sup>67</sup> In exchange for that, the Acehnese wanted the new Republic to adopt Islamic values.

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<sup>63</sup> Kell, *The Root*, 64.

<sup>64</sup> Bertrand, *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*, 165.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ahmad Zaini, "The Darul Islam Movement in Aceh from the Perspective of Western Scholarship," <http://www.geocities.com/HotSprings/6774/zaini.html> (accessed December 10, 2008).

Before the Japanese surrender, on 22 June 1945, Indonesian Muslims asserted their political will by drafting a preamble to the constitution that was also known as the “*Piagam Jakarta*” (Jakarta Charter). The controversial assertion was on the first principle of *Pancasila*, which states “the belief in one God, with the obligation for adherents of Islam to practice *Syariah* (Islamic law).” After the “*Panitia Sembilan*” (Nine Member of Soekarno’s Advisory Council) achieved a compromise, instead of an Islamic state, Indonesia became secular based on *Pancasila* with freedom of religion guaranteed. The second clause was excluded as a concession to the non-Muslim populations of the eastern archipelago.<sup>68</sup> Some Muslims viewed this as a betrayal of their aspirations. The vast majority of the Muslims, the non-Muslim organizations, and the military, however, agreed with this idea.<sup>69</sup> This issue produced the polarization of several groups from the Republic, and led to the emergence of rebellion under the banner of Islam. There were three Islamic resistance movements in post-independence Indonesia inspired by the wish for an Islamic State, and all either under the banner of the fundamentalist Darul Islam movement or Masyumi.<sup>70</sup> As a result, Islam in this period became linked with the rebellions that opposed secular central government.

There had been important events in this period, including the agreements that implied sovereignty over the whole territory of the Republic of Indonesia as we know it today. The coming into being of the Republic could be tracked from agreements between the Netherlands and Indonesia. The Linggardjati Agreement was finally signed by both sides on March 25, 1947 after being initiated in November 1946. The agreement provided for the de facto recognition of the sovereignty of the Republic over the Islands

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<sup>68</sup> R. Michael Feener, *Muslim Legal Thought in Modern Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 56. (Indonesia, Indonesia in Perspective 2001).

<sup>69</sup> Allan A. Samson, “Army and Islam in Indonesia,” *Pacific Affairs* (University of British Columbia, 1971–1972), 552.

<sup>70</sup> Samson, “Army and Islam in Indonesia,” 549. Howard M. Federspiel, “The Military and Islam in Sukarno’s Indonesia,” *Pacific Affair* (University of Columbia, 1973), 409. Federspiel noted that the major Islamic movements can be qualified as doctrinaire since each seeks to preserve values of orthodox Islam as developed in the Middle East. Doctrinaire Muslims comprise 30 to 40 percent of the population of Indonesia while syncretic Muslims, who were mostly opposed to the idea of Islamic state, constitute 40 to 60 percent.

of Java, Sumatra, and Madura.<sup>71</sup> This agreement was clearly a violation of Indonesia's independence proclamation of August 17, 1945, which implied sovereignty over the entire territory of the Republic and led to disapproval by the people. As a consequence, guerilla fighting continued to expel the Dutch troops. The offensive was, however, put to an end by the signing of the Renville agreement on January 17, 1948. This truce agreement was subsequently violated by the Dutch before the end of December 1948. The Dutch armed forces carried out their second military operation within the Republican-controlled territory. They arrested President Soekarno and Vice President Muhammad Hatta, as well as other national leaders.

On January 28, 1949, the UN Security Council issued a resolution to establish a cease-fire, and demanded the release of Indonesia's leaders. After a series of negotiation efforts to end the hostilities, the Republican Government and the Dutch signed an agreement on the Round Table conference in The Hague on November 2, 1949, under the auspices of the UN. The Dutch now recognized the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia. On December 27, 1949 the Dutch East Indies became the sovereign Federal Republic of Indonesia with a federal constitution.<sup>72</sup> Aceh was included in this agreement as a part of the Dutch colonial possession and as a valid sovereignty over territory that was then incorporated into the Dutch East Indies.<sup>73</sup>

On the other side, Acehnese Islamist leaders realized that the nationalist leaders of the Republic did not share their goals, and they felt betrayed due to the rejection of Islam as the ideology of the state. The PUSA leaders who ran the Aceh administration tried to negotiate with the central government to win provincial status for Aceh. The government, through Deputy Minister Syarifuddin Prawiranegara, responded to the Acehnese aspiration by issuing the *Peraturan Pemerintah* (Governmental Regulation)

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<sup>71</sup> Charles Cheney Hyde, "The Status of the Republic of Indonesia in International Law," *Columbia Law Review* 49, (Columbia Review Association Inc., 1949), 957–966.

<sup>72</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, "Indonesia in Perspective," in *Indonesia: Issues, Historical Background, and Bibliography*, ed. by William C. Younce (New York: Nova Science Publisher, 2001), 111.

<sup>73</sup> Hyde, "The Status," 957–966.

No.8/Des/WKPM/1949 on January 1, 1950, which granted Aceh full autonomy as a separate province under Daud Beureuh's leadership. The autonomy allowed the local government to control natural resources. The central government, however, changed its decision after transforming the country from a federal into a unitary state in August 1950, and integrating the region of Aceh into the province of North Sumatra. This decision, of course, led to dissatisfaction among the Acehnese. The abolition of Aceh's provincial status and the transfer of authority to a non-Acehnese administrator, which was controlled by Christian Bataks in Medan, the capital city of north Sumatra, created various political and economic implications.<sup>74</sup> The government tried to persuade the PUSA leaders to accept this change, and yet never fully achieved compromise. Daud Beureuh and other *ulama* insisted on the establishment of an Islamic Indonesia as their initial moral-based struggle by utilizing another approach, joining the Darul Islam movement.

Daud Beureuh declared Aceh part of *Negara Islam Indonesia* (NII: Indonesia Islamic State) on 21 September 1953, and linked to the Darul Islam (DI) rebellions that began in 1948 in West Java under the leadership of S.M Kartosuwiryo. Daud Beureuh mobilized his followers to resist the central government by ordering his armed units to attack government offices and security posts to confiscate arms.<sup>75</sup> His actions, however, were opposed by some *ulama* who stated that Daud Beureuh's movement was *bughat* (forbidden), due to the legality of the Soekarno presidency.<sup>76</sup> The government then launched a military operation to suppress the resistance to restore order. The initial military operation, however, failed to curb armed rebellion as the rebels employed a guerilla strategy. Daud Beureuh agreed to negotiate only if the government would give Aceh status on the basis of Islam. Beureuh's statement made it clear that the Acehnese had aspired from the beginning to establish a state with a constitution based on Islam.

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<sup>74</sup> Aspinall, 152.

<sup>75</sup> Sulaiman, "From Autonomy to Periphery," 130.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 131.



It was apparent that the first Acehese rebellion sought to convert Indonesia to an Islamic state, but it was not a separatist movement in nature since Aceh remained an integral part of the Republic of Indonesia. The DI revolt confronted the Indonesian government that implemented a secularist concept instead of the Islamic option. To justify their violence, DI leaders depicted their enemy as *kafir* (infidel), indeed, Islamic values became the ideological backbone of almost every political movement in this period. And yet, under the Soekarno administration, the original Acehese grievances had gradually grown since the government became more and more centralist and repressive in responding to regional aspirations. The proponents of this movement believed that Islamic law should have been implemented for the Indonesian state. In 1945, the *Nahdatul Ulama* (NU, Awakening of the Ulama) joined with the Masyumi in advocating the establishment of an Islamic state for Indonesia.<sup>77</sup> The NU split off from Masyumi in 1952, and in 1960, Masyumi was disbanded and its leaders arrested and imprisoned. The NU was, however, able to maintain political and tactical flexibility by accepting Soekarno's authority and suspended the ultimate goal of an Islamic state in exchange for control over the Ministry of Religion and the protection of its political position in the Javanese countryside.<sup>78</sup> Under the pre-1965 Soekarno administration, the department was dominated by officials from the NU.<sup>79</sup> Its leadership finally agreed that, in the interest of national unity, it was acceptable for Indonesia not to be organized as an Islamic state following some disagreement about what the nature of the Indonesian state should be.<sup>80</sup> While Masyumi was considered a traitor to the nation, the NU presented itself as a loyal ally to the president and the armed forces.<sup>81</sup> The main reason for this was

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<sup>77</sup> Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslim and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 87.

<sup>78</sup> Ira M Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 670.

<sup>79</sup> Charles F. Keyes, Laurel Kendall, and Helen Hardacre, *Asian Visions of Authority: Religion and the Modern States of East and Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 88.

<sup>80</sup> Angel Rabasa, Cheryl Benard, and Peter Chalk, *The Muslim World after 9/11* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2004), 370.

<sup>81</sup> Hefner, *Civil Islam*, 86.

that Pancasila could accommodate the diversity of ethnic, regional and religious elements that formed Indonesia. Under Pancasila the state had an obligation to promote religiosity without favoring any religion in particular.<sup>82</sup>

### **3. The First GAM Rebellion (1976–79)**

The debate and movement in favor of an Islamic state, whether in Aceh or throughout the country, were no longer accepted after the country returned to the 1945 Constitution following the imposition of “*Dekrit Presiden*” (Presidential Decree) in June 1959. Soekarno’s authoritarian rule under Guided Democracy reaffirmed that the state’s ideology was Pancasila and ended the debate on the state’s ideology. Here, as Bertrand argues, the centralization of political, economic and military power as the nature of Guided Democracy and subsequent to the New Order, gradually reduced Aceh’s special status. The regime became centralized and tended to utilize military power to put down resistance movements, especially those that were separatist in nature.<sup>83</sup>

After the downfall of the Soekarno regime, and following the abortive Indonesian Communist Party in September 1965, the New Order regime, which was dominated by the armed forces led by President Soeharto emerged. The new administration became more centralized than the previous government especially in controlling economic resources.<sup>84</sup> After almost a decade of little center-periphery conflict, Acehnese dissatisfaction reemerged in the early 1970s. The discovery of a huge oil and natural gas reserve in North Aceh by Exxon Mobil Oil Indonesia triggered the regional sentiment as if all of the Aceh’s wealth were transferred to Jakarta.<sup>85</sup> The establishment of the Lhokseumawe Industrial Development Zone (ZILS) in 1977 drew the arrival of non-Acehnese workers, and at the same time, increased the presence of armed forces to secure

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<sup>82</sup> Jacques Bertrand, “Democratization and Religious and Nationalist Conflict in Post-Suharto Indonesia,” in *Democratization and Identity: Regime and Ethnicity in East and Southeast Asia*, ed. by Susan J. Henders (Lanham: Lexington Book, a division of Rowman & Littlefield Publisher Inc., 2007), 195.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>84</sup> Hefner, *Civil Islam*, 58.

<sup>85</sup> John Bresnan, *Indonesia: the great transition* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 40.

the profitable national asset.<sup>86</sup> By the end of the 1980s, Aceh was contributing 30 percent of the country's total oil and gas export, making Aceh one of the main sources of the government's revenue.<sup>87</sup>

The centralized fiscal system allowed the revenues from these investments to move directly to foreign investors, Indonesian partners, and the central government. According to this centralized budgetary system, the local government received its annual budget from the central government. The concept of a unitary state allowed the natural resources found in any province to be used to subsidize the poorer regions. In other words, Aceh would support the central government as well as the other provinces' expenditures. The provincial government had no rights to tax the oil and gas revenue, and as a result, the provincial budget only received a small amount of the total revenue that was produced in the province.<sup>88</sup> Ironically, the vast majority of the Acehnese remained at work in the agricultural sectors and enjoyed no significant benefits from the industrial complex. The local population continued to rely on traditional agriculture and fishery, and their lack of education and required skills meant that most Acehnese lacked the ability to compete with non-Acehnese in getting jobs in the modern industrial compound. The booming production of natural resources failed to increase the living standard of the average Acehnese. The centralization of state power that characterized the New Order regime was unable to enhance Aceh's economy in general. As a consequence, the local population did not benefit from the fast-growing industrial zone generated by Aceh's natural resources.

The first GAM rebellion broke out in October 1976 under the leadership of Hasan Tiro who created the Aceh Sumatra National Liberation Front (ASNLF), which was also known as Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM, Free Aceh Movement). Hasan Tiro is the son of the hero of Aceh's struggle against the Dutch, Tengku Cik di Tiro who was linked to the Darul Islam (DI) movement in the 1950s. But unlike the Darul Islam rebellion, the

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<sup>86</sup> Miller, 295.

<sup>87</sup> Cribb and Kahin, *Historical dictionary of Indonesia*, 5.

<sup>88</sup> Kell, *The Root*, 15.

GAM opposition clearly took the form of an ethno-nationalist movement, seeking separation from the Republic of Indonesia. When Tiro declared the independence of Aceh-Sumatra in December 1976, he did not mention an Islamic state as the GAM's primary goal as had been previously demanded by the Darul Islam; he changed the argument by exercising an ethnic-based propaganda to provoke Acehese sentiment against "Javanese colonialism" (which he refers to as Indonesia) in which the Javanese replace the Dutchmen as emperors.<sup>89</sup> He also paid more attention to Aceh's natural wealth and said that the Acehese should have benefited from its resources like in Brunei Darussalam.<sup>90</sup> Acehese nationalists frequently depicted Indonesian rule as colonial, and as an extension of Dutch rule. For that reason, the GAM struggle was a continuation of opposition to the Dutch. As Aspinall noted, the independence of Aceh, which was declared in 1976, was a successor state to the nineteenth-century sultanate.<sup>91</sup>

Many Acehese argued that Aceh was never conquered by the Dutch, or as Drexler stated in the common rhetoric which still exists today: "Without the contributions of Aceh, Indonesia might not exist today," and "Acehese collected enough gold to buy the planes [Seulawah 01 and 02]." He also said, "We gave milk and Indonesia reciprocated with poison."<sup>92</sup> It became clear that the Acehese people found themselves in a complicated dilemma when they dealt with history that was difficult to forget. Aceh was, of course, conquered by the Dutch and included in Indonesia when the country became independent.<sup>93</sup> Some scholars also believe that the GAM leaders' views reflected past romanticism as well as frustration in seeking international support and recognition, and was aimed at propaganda purposes. The bases of Tiro's arguments were apparently to construct national identity and target the Acehese people. Tiro effectively

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<sup>89</sup> Kell, *The Root*, 62.

<sup>90</sup> Anthony Bebbington, *Institutional pathway to equity: addressing inequality traps* (Washington D.C.: World Bank, 2008), 204.

<sup>91</sup> Aspinall, "Sovereignty, the Successor State," 11–12.

<sup>92</sup> Drexler, *Aceh, Indonesia*, 65.

<sup>93</sup> Stefan Wolff, *Ethnic Conflict: a Global Perspective* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 197.

employed rhetoric as though Aceh had been exploited by the Javanese neo-colonialism, and at the same time, he promoted Acehnese ethnic nationalism:

We, the people of Aceh, Sumatra, exercising our right to self-determination, and protecting our historic right of eminent domain to our fatherland, do hereby declare ourselves free and independent from all political control of the foreign regime of Jakarta and the alien people of the island of Java . . . The Javanese, nevertheless, are attempting to perpetuate colonialism which all the Western colonial powers had abandoned and all the world had condemned. During these last thirty years the people of Aceh, Sumatra have witnessed how our fatherland has been exploited and driven into ruinous conditions by the Javanese neo-colonialists: they have stolen our properties; they have robbed us from our livelihood; they have abused the education of our children; they have put our people in chains of tyranny, poverty and neglect.<sup>94</sup>

Unfortunately, the government responded by relying heavily on military force as a primary tool to maintain the national integrity that had been characterized by the New Order regime. There could be no compromise with separatists as the unity and integrity of the state was at stake.<sup>95</sup> The rebellion had no capability to challenge the government's military forces, and this led to the defeat of the rebellion. Not only was the first rebellion defeated in a relatively short period of time, but it also failed to gain popular support especially among the Acehnese *ulama*, since GAM heavily promoted the secular platform. The lack of the popular support, as Kell argues, was in sharp contrast to movements in the past, when the *ulama* played an important role as a distinctive and cohesive social group who had the capacity to challenge the state power. Under the New Order regime, in contrast, they had no significant political influence due to the extreme centralization of state power.<sup>96</sup> As a result, the *ulama* were no longer considered the main leaders of the Acehnese. Although the Indonesian military operation managed to crush GAM, it failed to capture Hasan Tiro. Tiro, who at that time was a local

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<sup>94</sup> Hasan Muhammad Tiro, *The Price of Freedom: the Unfinished Diary* (Norsborg: Informational Department National Liberation Front Aceh Sumatra, 1981), 24–26.

<sup>95</sup> Robert Cribb, "Indonesia: History," in *The Far East and Australasia 2003*, ed. by Eur, Europa Publication Staff (Routledge, 2002), 533.

<sup>96</sup> Kell, *The Root*, 60.

businessman, and in 1950s had been the representative of Darul Islam at the United Nations, left Aceh in 1979. He established a government in exile in Sweden and continued his struggle from there.

#### **4. The Second GAM Rebellion (1989–91)**

The rapid development of Aceh due to the boom of LNG between 1978 and 1989 increased Aceh's income per capita some 69.5 percent.<sup>97</sup> This, ironically, generated social tension when tens of thousands of infrastructure workers and job-seekers from outside Aceh came to the province. The influx of non-Acehnese workers led to competition for jobs, which became fierce and contributed to grievances that encouraged the 1989 reemergence of GAM. The second GAM, a decade after the first rebellion, began attacking military and police posts across the region. This time, GAM returned in a larger force and with better equipment than the previous time. According to some estimates, the number of active members was about 750, and some 250 received military training in Libya.<sup>98</sup> And yet it still lacked popular support. Many believed that the second emergence was due to three factors to ensure the organization's survival. First, the Libyan government provided military training, but only training, not arms.<sup>99</sup> GAM obtained arms from the Indonesian security forces whose installations they raided.<sup>100</sup> Second, its leadership was safe in exile where it continued its struggle for independence. Acehnese communities also contributed funds and safe havens in neighboring countries like Malaysia.<sup>101</sup> Third, the various human rights abuses committed by the military in

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<sup>97</sup> Michael L. Ross, "Resources and Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia," in *Understanding Civil War*, ed. by Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis (Washington D.C.: World Bank, 2005), 42.

<sup>98</sup> Ross, 43.

<sup>99</sup> Kell, *The Root*, 73.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Rizal Sukma, *Security Operation in Aceh: Goal, Consequences, and Lessons* (Washington D.C.: East-West Center Washington, 2004), 6.

the hope of suppressing GAM quickly generated unexpected results. The new generations of GAM came from the families' victims in Pidie, North Aceh and East Aceh.<sup>102</sup>

In 1990, the military responded with heavy-handed security measures by launching counterinsurgency operations to curb the renewed challenge. At this time, Aceh was regarded as a "military operation area" (DOM, *Daerah Operasi Militer*) where the government was able to launch military operations at will. Many of GAM's military commanders had been captured or killed. The government's action was successful in a short period of time. By 1991, GAM had been defeated by the military.<sup>103</sup> However, this operation proved counter-productive as the casualties were largely civilian. Many believe that the prolonged use of violence failed to address the main problem, and in fact, the Acehnese turned against the military and the Indonesian government. During ten years of military operations, thousands of Acehnese lost their lives. According to a Human Rights Watch (HRW) report published in 2001, in late 1998, the group documented 871 people killed by the army and 387 missing who were later reported dead. More than 500 were under the status "disappeared" and were never found. Tens of thousands of Acehnese were imprisoned and tortured in military camps. In addition, hundreds of documented rape cases and various human rights violations affected many Acehnese until the end of the military operations (DOM) in August 1998.<sup>104</sup> This was clear evidence that the brutal military operations only increased extreme dislike for the government and the military, and contributed directly to the third GAM emergence in 1999.

## **5. The Third GAM Rebellion (1999–2005)**

The downfall of the Soeharto administration in 1989 marked the transition from authoritarian regime to democracy. Soeharto's successor, President Habibie, launched a

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<sup>102</sup> Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization* (Washington: East–West Center Washington), 5.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Human Right Watch (HRW) Report Vol.13 No. 4, (C), "Indonesia: The War in Aceh," 2001, 8.

breakthrough by offering the East Timorese a choice between separation from or integration into the Republic, and the Timorese ultimately managed to gain total separation from Indonesia through a referendum in 1999. Habibie's decision increased secessionist activities in Aceh, and also brought a response from student groups in Aceh that established organizations such as SIRA (acronym of the Independent Voters of Aceh) that demanded a similar referendum. When East Timor eventually separated from Indonesia, it created a massive demonstration across Aceh, and according to some estimates, more than 500,000 Acehnese gathered in the capital city of Banda Aceh in 1999 to support the referendum. To pacify the tension in Aceh, Jakarta responded by admitting that serious human rights had taken place in Aceh in the previous decade. President Habibie and Armed Forces Chief Wiranto separately admitted the wrongdoings committed by the military and apologized for the military's human rights violations. Some senior military officers disagreed with the idea of the military asking for forgiveness.<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless, General Wiranto finally declared a withdrawal of the military and marked the end of the DOM era in 1998.

President Abdurahman Wahid, after assuming power through election in 1999, continued the political dialog, and promoted the Aceh conflict as an international issue. An agreement for a Humanitarian Pause was signed on 12 May 2000 in Geneva, and officially ended in February 2001. This policy, however, did not impact GAM's activity; in fact, GAM used this agreement to increase its strength. The agreement failed to stop the violence, and according to an International Crisis Group (ICG) report, by mid-2001, the number of GAM fighters had increased dramatically to about 3,000 with more assault rifles and grenade launchers, and controlled 80 percent of Aceh's villages.<sup>106</sup> GAM's arsenal had grown both in quality and quantity since the start of the Humanitarian Pause. GAM also successfully recruited its members by force initially, but over time it also persuaded the children of people who had been killed or tortured by the military under the DOM to avenge their parents. Ross cited from the Jakarta Post reported on July 30,

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<sup>105</sup> Adam Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting: Indonesia's search for stability* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2000), 399.

<sup>106</sup> Ross, 47.



2000, the GAM's new recruits were children of the DOM victims.<sup>107</sup> Rebel attacks in Aceh escalated toward the end of Wahid's presidency and forced him to authorize harsher military action against the rebels.<sup>108</sup>

In July 2001, President Wahid was impeached and replaced by his vice president, Megawati Soekarnoputri. She took a harsher approach by forcing GAM to accept autonomy as a framework before proceeding to further talks; otherwise the military would launch operations on the village of Cot Trieng, one of the GAM strongholds, in November 2002.<sup>109</sup> As a result, on 9 December 2002, GAM agreed to conclude a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA) with the government. However, the agreement failed to lead to a compromise. GAM wanted independence while the government offered an autonomy which was considered "the least desirable option," by GAM, and led to the collapse of the agreement in May 2003.<sup>110</sup>

#### D. SUMMARY

Since the time when Aceh was under the reign of the sultanate, it has played a key role in shaping faith-identity on the world's Islamic stage by depicting itself as a *Serambi Mekkah* (Verandah of Mecca). During that period, Aceh also faced extensive foreign entities either in peaceful trade with merchants of many nationalities, or hostile encounters with the European powers. During the pre-colonial era, Aceh was legendary for its long history of devout Islam and resistance to external rules. An 1824 Anglo-Dutch treaty placed Aceh in the Dutch sphere of influence, and then the Dutch quickly took control of Sumatra. In the subsequent four decades of bloody war with the Dutch, the *uleebalang* who gradually became supporters of Dutch colonialism, had created a crucial change in Acehnese society. The tension between *uleebalang* and the *ulama*

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<sup>107</sup> Ross, 48.

<sup>108</sup> Karen Guttieri and Jessica Piombo, *Interim Government: institutional bridges to peace and democracy?* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007), 166.

<sup>109</sup> Damien Kingsburry, *Peace in Aceh: a personal account of the Helsinki peace process* (Jakarta: Equinox Publisher, 2006), 13.

<sup>110</sup> Schulze, 265.

escalated before the invasion by the Japanese in 1942, and months after the Japanese surrender in August 1945. The emergence of *ulama* belonged to the All-Aceh Union of *Ulama* (PUSA) led by Daud Beureuh as Acehnese leadership through social revolution resulted in the Acehnese becoming increasingly Islamic in their resistance ever since. In the revolutionary period, Aceh proved to be one of the toughest Republic strongholds, forcing the Dutch to stay away from the region. The problems, however, came after some Acehnese demands were not able to be fulfilled by the central government. Despite some national government policies that were implemented, the problems persisted. First, the government revoked Aceh's provincial status in 1951 after the adoption of the unitary state for the entire country in 1950. This policy impacted Aceh's provincial status economically, politically and socially since Aceh came under the leadership of the predominantly Christian Bataks in Medan. Second, the PUSA *ulama* felt they were betrayed by the Republican government due to the implementation of the secular concept for the Indonesian state.

In 1953, Daud Bereuh responded to the government decision by launching a revolt under the banner of the Darul Islam movement. This rebellion, however, was not secessionist in nature, but rather a movement to force the government to implement Islamic law for all of Indonesia. The insurgency was subsequently put to an end by both military and political measures. The military actions, however, not only increased separatist sentiment, but also generated various violations of human rights by the soldiers. Despite the Darul Islam rebellion, it was clearly evident that the Acehnese demonstrated their loyalty to the Republic. The government then granted Aceh a special status, *Daerah Istimewa* [special region], autonomy in terms of religion, *adat* (customary) law, and

education after Daud Beureuh surrendered in 1962.<sup>111</sup> When Aceh came under the New Order regime in the mid-1960s, the special status had little meaning as the government became more centralized than during the previous regime. The government never fulfilled its promise since Aceh remained a special region in name only. Furthermore, it became common for the central government to appoint the governors to run the provinces.

The discovery of oil and gas in North Aceh in 1971 contributed almost one-third of the total national export making Aceh a reliable source of national revenue. The industrial complexes that were established soon after oil and gas were discovered led to the increasing arrival of Javanese officials and non-Acehnese workers in the Aceh region. The local population surrounding the complex saw that the non-Acehnese ethnic groups became richer, while the locals had nothing but toxic waste and pollution. Lack of education and skills contributed to the failure of the Acehnese in the competition to get jobs in their own region. The social gap between the non-Acehnese and the locals became increasingly wider and deeper. A government unresponsive to these social issues led to the emergence of *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (GAM) taking over the government's responsibility. Hasan Tiro led the GAM, but this time was seeking total independence from the Republic, a clear distinction from the Darul Islam in terms of its primary goal. The government of Indonesia heavily employed military measures to destroy the revolt. The military then successfully defeated GAM in the 1970s, and yet apparently failed to address the root causes of the Aceh conflict, and in fact, the feeling of being Indonesian had gradually faded away.

The collapse of the Soeharto regime in 1998 marked a different way to address the Acehnese conflict. The Acehnese struggle broadened into a civil movement that asked for a popular referendum following President Habibie's offer to the East Timorese to either integrate or separate from Indonesia through a referendum. Aceh, in contrast, had a different history of integration than that of East Timor; Aceh was always part of the

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<sup>111</sup> Kirsten E. Schulze, "The Struggle for and Independence Aceh: The Ideology, Capacity, and Strategy of GAM," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (Taylor & Francis, 2003), 242.

Indonesian territory as stated in the Round Table Conference Agreement in 1949. The 1949 agreement had been very important since it provided for a transfer of sovereignty from the Dutch East Indies to Indonesia while Aceh was the Dutch colonial possession. Habibie attempted to resolve the Aceh conflict through negotiation and suspended military actions and revoked DOM status (Military Operation Zone). His successor, President Abdurrahman Wahid, as well as President Megawati, offered negotiations, but when the negotiations failed, they both relied on military options. They repeated Soeharto's authoritarian style of suppressing the rebellions that increased Acehnese resentments and proved counter-productive. From this point, we can see that since Indonesia declared independence in 1945, the Acehnese have never received assistance of any kind from the Republican government, yet their struggle was in the name of Indonesia. Ironically, the Acehnese sacrificed a lot for Indonesia, but in exchange for nothing. Here, as Anthony Reid put it, Indonesia has needed Aceh far more than Aceh has needed Indonesia.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Anthony Reid, "Colonial Transformation: a Bitter Legacy," in *Verandah of Violence* ed. by Anthony Reid (Singapore: University of Singapore, 2006), 107.

### III. MILITARY APPROACHES

#### A. INTRODUCTION

Mao Tse-Tung has described guerillas like “the fish in a water.” The water can live by itself, but not the fish.<sup>113</sup> The Chinese defeated the Japanese Imperial army through a combination of popular support and guerilla tactics. Mao’s successful strategy to drive the Japanese imperial army out of China was widely recognized, and became an inspiration for many scholars as to how guerilla warfare should be conducted. Using this point we can also provide strategies on how to defeat guerilla bands by separating “fish” from “water.” From the previous chapter, we can see that the rebellion in Aceh came and went, depending upon popular support. It is widely known that counter-insurgency and insurgency operations treated the population as the center of gravity; this assertion represents a struggle for the hearts and minds of the people rather than a struggle for territory or against military forces. From this insight, counterinsurgency is a political and social problem rather than a military one.<sup>114</sup>

Although Mao had no direct influence on the Aceh rebellions, his thinking and concepts in carrying out a protracted popular war based on a guerilla campaign could be an inspiration for every guerilla band around the world. In addition, Mao’s guerilla strategy was considered one of the most successful guerilla strategies of all time.<sup>115</sup> In the case of the Aceh conflict, the counter-insurgency (COIN) strategy employed by the Indonesian military proved ineffective to defeat the insurgents militarily, or at least needed a long time to achieve victory over them. GAM, on the other hand, was unable to defeat the Indonesian military. The inability to win this war brought the two sides to the negotiating table and made a compromise settlement possible. The government required

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<sup>113</sup> Mao Zedong, *On Guerilla Warfare* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 8.

<sup>114</sup> Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf, Jr, *Rebellion and Authority: An Analytic Essay on Insurgent Conflicts* (Chicago: Markham Publishing Company, 1970), 6.

<sup>115</sup> Michael Radu and Anthony Arnold, *The New Insurgency: anticommunist guerilla in the Third World* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publisher, 1990), 14.

almost three decades before concluding a peace agreement that granted Aceh wide-ranging autonomous power within the Republic of Indonesia. Based on this assumption, I will evaluate what went wrong and what went right in utilizing COIN strategies. In this chapter, I will discuss the success and failure of the military operations employed by the Indonesian military to suppress GAM. I will also evaluate the COIN strategy employed against the first GAM rebellion from 1976 to the 1980s when the military was able to destroy the rebellion in a relatively short period of time before it reemerged a decade later. McCormick's diamond model is used to measure the success and failure of the counter-insurgency (COIN) strategy.

## **B. COUNTER-INSURGENCY**

### **1. McCormick's Model**

Many scholars have developed models for understanding insurgency and counter-insurgency (COIN) to deal with the armed conflicts that might take place in many countries. One model that has been developed by Dr. Gordon McCormick, the Head of the Defense Analysis Department at the Naval Postgraduate School, is the "Mystic Diamond," or "Diamond Model." It involves four key elements or players that demonstrate the strategies for their interactions. The interactions, as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 3, place the population at the center of gravity (COG). The model develops a symmetrical view of the required actions for contestants to succeed. For this reason, there is a direct correlation between the success and failure of the implementation of insurgency and COIN strategies, which are determined by the degree that the forces follow the model. Another study by McCormick et al. will be beneficial to describe an ineffective COIN strategy employed by the Indonesian military to destroy GAM. How GAM developed its ability to make a comeback later in time, after being defeated by the military, requires explanation. I will then return to the model.

*a. A Strong Actor, a Weak Win*

It is widely known that guerilla warfare can be protracted for decades depending upon the abilities of the guerillas to employ hit-and-run attacks against security forces. Attack the enemy when ready and hide if the enemy far stronger. When Indonesia was under the occupation of the Dutch, the newly established Indonesian army fought against Dutch colonialism; the indigenous army and the population lived in the jungles and mountains to conduct guerilla warfare. After gaining its independence in 1945, Indonesia had to face several rebellions from either separatists in (rebellions) or revolts (to topple the government). Since independence, the military has successfully fought rebels and brought them to the recognition of the government. Based on the experiences in the past in conducting guerilla tactics, the counter-insurgency strategies employed by the military since the early independence of the Republic proved effective and decisive enough to curb the rebellions, which also employed guerilla tactics. In the case of Aceh and East Timor, however, the military had more difficulty. These exceptions require a good explanation.

As McCormick, Horton and Harrison note, most internal wars end on the battlefield and only a small number end at the negotiating table.<sup>116</sup> I will thus focus on how the first GAM rebellion was resolved by force and subsequently at the negotiating table. To demonstrate the endgame dynamic of the first GAM rebellion, this part provides an explanation of how it took place. McCormick's study showed that there have been some 300 internal conflicts similar to that of Aceh that were initiated since the end of World War II. More than 80 percent of these internal wars were concluded on the battlefield, and only 20 percent were resolved by agreement. See the statistic presented in Table 1.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Gordon H. McCormick, Steven B Horton, and Lauren A Harrison, "Things Fall Apart: the endgame dynamics of internal wars," *Third World Quarterly*, (Routledge, 2007), 322.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

INSURGENT CONFLICT SINCE 1945		
<b>Total Insurgent-State Dyads Since 1945<sup>118</sup></b>	<b>278</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Continuing Insurgent-State dyads</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>15.83%</b>
<b>Concluded Insurgent-State Dyads</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>84.17%</b>
State Losses	18	7.69%
Insurgent Losses	108	44.44%
Nominal Settlements (State Loss)	16	6.84%
Nominal Settlements (Insurgent Loss)	27	11.54%
Real Negotiated Settlements	47	20.09%
Other/NA Endgames	22	9.40%

Table 1. Insurgent Conflict Since 1945

We can see that there are 276 cases of insurgent-state dyads since 1945, which include 44 ongoing insurgent-state conflicts and 234 resolved insurgent-state conflicts. In their study of wars between insurgents and states, they found that the states have a greater chance of victory. The state's objective is to regain power while the insurgent's is to expand popular support and defeat or displace the state. In the case of GoI-GAM conflict, the rebellion lacked the capability to defeat the military. This was due to the fact that the rebellion did not involve the entire population of the vast archipelago, but only some parts of the Aceh province. Unlike the previous war, in the revolutionary era, when the much of the population fought against the Dutch occupation, this type of localized guerilla war cannot be categorized as revolutionary war,<sup>119</sup> since this war did not engage the bulk of the population, or even a significant part of the population, against the military forces or the Indonesian authority.<sup>120</sup> In addition, the TNI had a force advantage since the beginning of the conflict. GAM, on the other hand, needed to develop its strength in order to challenge the military. In order to win, GAM needed to expand its size over time, and as an indicator, the conflict between the two

<sup>118</sup> McCormick et al., "Things Fall Apart." The use of the term "insurgent-state dyad" is for counting purposes.

<sup>119</sup> The word of "Revolutionary War," refers to the revolution of the American colonies against Great Britain; 1775–1783, In this case, the revolution means an attempt to overthrow a government by those who are governed. GAM, of course, had no ability to do that.

<sup>120</sup> Robert Taber, *War of the Flea, the Classic Study of Guerilla Warfare* (Dulles: Potomac Book, Inc, 2002), 4.



would escalate. But, perhaps GAM did not need to win; rather it only needed to prevent the military from winning. A state wins, however, as McCormick et al. argue when the insurgent group is defeated or displaced by a state, or is no longer a significant combat force.<sup>121</sup> Thus, to keep this from happening, GAM required popular support. But how did the Indonesian military defeat the first GAM rebellion?

In 1962, the Government of Indonesia (GoI) successfully crushed the Darul Islam rebellion, after a decade of trying, by employing a combination of counter-insurgency and negotiation. The first GAM rebellion was initiated in 1976 after Hasan Tiro declared Acehese independence, but it lasted a relatively short period of time. The latest revolt was the continuation of the 1976 rebellion and had no direct connection to the Darul Islam movement. Since the first rebellion had no wide popular support, the military was able to fight GAM directly. At the time, its emergence was relatively small and underfinanced, and it was easily suppressed by the military. GAM members had only limited places to hide amongst the population due to lack of popular support and largely relied on the jungles and mountains. It was thus difficult for GAM to avoid the government troops who were well-trained and well-equipped for jungle operations. GAM's strength (1976–79) was only 25 to 200 active members, but it gradually increased its number to be some 200–750 in the 1990s.<sup>122</sup> In 2001, according to some estimations of the strength of GAM's military wing, AGAM, it had jumped from about 15,000 to 27,000 combatants, but they were lightly armed with 1,000 to 1,500 modern firearms, a few grenade launchers, and some rocket propelled grenades and mortars.<sup>123</sup> On the other hand, there were around 10,000 non-organic military forces in about fifteen battalions while some 7,000 Brimob (Mobile Brigade/police paramilitary) troops were stationed in the province; in fact, the number of troops reached about 30,000 in about eighteen TNI

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<sup>121</sup> McCormick et al., "Things Fall Apart," 322–323.

<sup>122</sup> Michael L. Ross, "Resources and Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia," in *Understanding Civil War*, ed. by Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis (The World Bank, 2005), 36.

<sup>123</sup> ICG Report No.17, *Aceh: Why Military Force Won't Bring Lasting Peace* (Jakarta/Brussels: International Crisis Group, June 12, 2001), 7.

battalion-sized units to augment the police strength.<sup>124</sup> In an asymmetric conflict like this, TNI was clearly the stronger actor, both in numbers and in combat capacity.

If strength implies success in this conflict, GAM should have been defeated. In order to be safe, GAM should have avoided direct confrontation with the Indonesian military. At this stage, GAM had no capacity to engage head-to-head with the military. Instead of avoiding the Indonesian military, in fact, GAM erroneously attacked a “soft target” in which one American engineer of Bechtel was killed, and others were injured in October 1977.<sup>125</sup> This attack, of course, sacrificed GAM’s image both locally and internationally. The Indonesian military began to hunt them down. As a result, in the early 1980s, most of its top leaders, including the first Prime Minister Muchtar Hasbi, were either killed or captured or had fled into exile.<sup>126</sup> The GAM leader Hasan Tiro, was shot in the leg in an ambush, and fled to Malaysia. He has subsequently moved to Stockholm, Sweden, where he has lived since 1980. The winner of this game was the government military, and as shown in Table 1, the vast majority of counter-insurgency operations are concluded on the battlefield.

And yet, it was apparent that GAM was not totally defeated by the military. In McCormick’s terminology, the military only achieved a “weak win” since the military as a strong actor succeeded in defeating GAM, but had no ability to extensively expand control over the political space.<sup>127</sup> As a result, GAM had the ability to reorganize itself by using its political grip to make a comeback later in time. When GAM made its comeback in 1998, with better military training and equipment, it was still difficult for GAM to directly challenge the military. Instead of attacking military personnel, GAM began targeting, again, “soft targets” such as local government officials and non-

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<sup>124</sup> ICG Report No.17, *Aceh: Why Military Force Won’t Bring Lasting Peace* (Jakarta/Brussels: International Crisis Group, June 12, 2001), 12.

<sup>125</sup> Marianne Heiberg, Brendan O’Leary, and John Tirman, *Terror, insurgency, and the state : ending protracted conflicts* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 95.

<sup>126</sup> William Nessen, “Sentiments Made Visible: The Rise and Reason of Aceh’s National Liberation Movement,” in *Verandah of Violence*, ed. by Anthony Reid (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004), 188.

<sup>127</sup> McCormick et al., “Things Fall Apart,” 326.

Acehnese settlers and destroyed commercial and public properties in the Lhokseumawe area. The government easily suppressed GAM in 1991 through counter-insurgency operations; many of GAM's military commanders were killed or captured. But still GAM was not totally defeated, and it reemerged in 1999 with widespread popular support. The next question is why and how GAM reemerged with better equipment and wider popular support? Understanding how this occurred can give us insight into what factors were favorable for GAM to reemerge, and at the same time demonstrate why the military became increasingly unpopular in the eyes of Acehnese.

***b. Diamond Model***

It is not that hard to answer the questions above. Using lessons learned from the first rebellion, GAM realized that the most important part of its struggle relied upon the population. While GAM paid much more attention to gaining popular support, the military moved in the opposite direction. GAM was able to grow from a small guerilla band to a movement that successfully controlled most of the province, including the establishment of local governments through their shadow civil service structure, making them a serious challenge to the government. As the separatist movement escalated, the central government tried to suppress it with full-scale military operations. This strategy to attack GAM military strength directly proved ineffective over time. This was due to the bitter consequences of the separation of East Timor after its rebellion was internationalized. The government then found its own way to solve the Aceh problem without intervention from foreign communities by relying heavily on a military solution in the hopes of defeating GAM as quickly as possible. This increased the degree of violence between the two. Instead of defeating GAM swiftly and decisively, the military operations generated human rights abuses and drew international condemnation. During this stage, GAM tried to internationalize its case by any means, in the hopes of gaining the same result as that of East Timor.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Eric Teo Chu Cheow, "The "Track 2" process within ASEAN and its implication in resolving the Aceh conflict in Indonesia" in *Conflict Management, Security and Intervention in East Asia*, edited by Jacob Bercovitch, Kwei-Bo Huang, Zhongqiang Deng, and Chung-Chiang Teng (London and New York: Taylor & Francis, 2008), 180.

As is mentioned in Chapter I (see Figure 1), the diamond model comprises four legs, which describe the interactions of the government, people, insurgents, and international actors, with the people as the center of gravity (COG), which should have been contested by both sides. The figure below provides a more detailed version than the one in Chapter 1.<sup>129</sup>

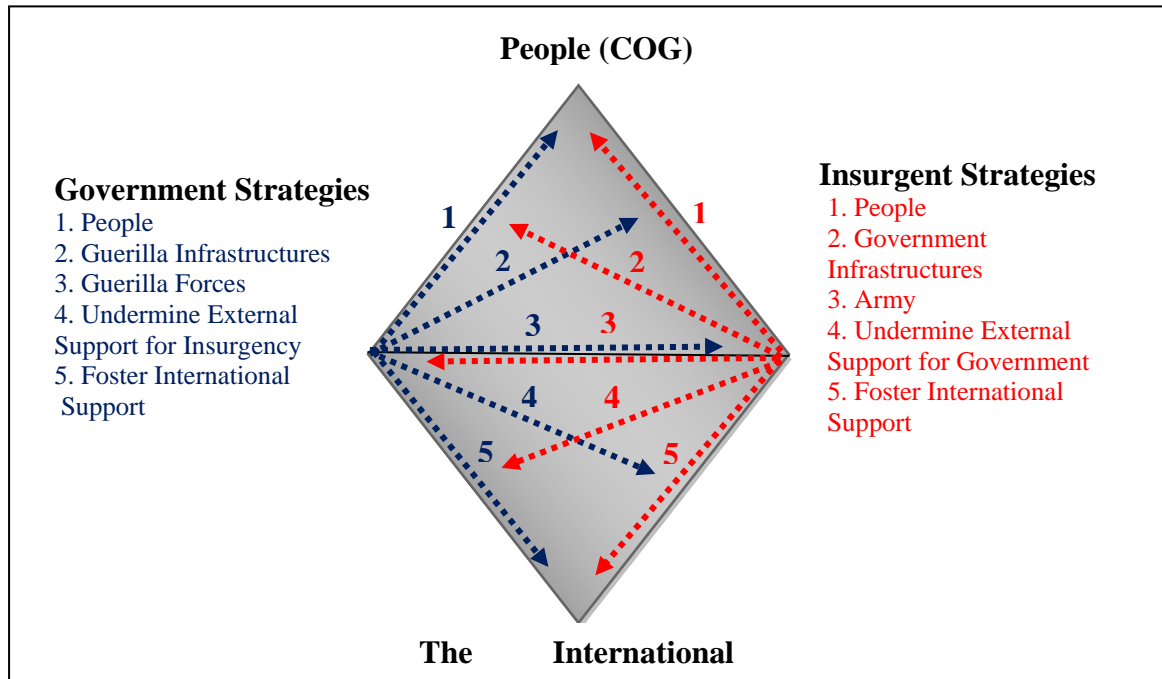


Figure 3. Diamond Model

The focus of the counter-insurgency operation must be the center of gravity, or the population. Most insurgent wars are internal wars fought for control of a territory; each side has the same population as a center of gravity (see leg 1). The purpose of both the political and military activities of the war is to influence the perception of the population.<sup>130</sup> The strategic objective of the COIN operations should be to protect civilians while destroying the insurgents and strengthening the

<sup>129</sup> This is the typical figure of McCormick's Mystic Diamond developed by Professor Gordon McCormick, the Head of the Defense Analysis Department at the Naval Postgraduate School.

<sup>130</sup> Donald M. Snow, *Distant thunder: Patterns of Conflict in the developing World*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 80.

government.<sup>131</sup> In the case of the Aceh conflict, however, the military apparently failed to maintain its dominance over the rebellion for a long period of time. GAM has always been able to come back again, with even greater popular support over time.

In order to gain popular support, the TNI should attack and weaken the strength of GAM without damaging its own support. Since supporters of both sides blend together in the population, the acts of brutality conducted by the military might alienate the neutral portions of the population. The political dimension of insurgency is the key to its success. Whether an insurgency will rise or fall depends on its ability to convert the population to its side. Hence the TNI should concentrate its efforts to prevent this from happening by making the population a center of gravity to win the hearts and minds of the people. In the Aceh conflict, it was clear that the TNI did not take that into consideration. For example, from 1976 to 1989, GAM's membership and support base was limited in numbers and capacity. Its members initially originated from Pidie, a village where Tiro came from. Most of its members were either the victims of DOM or from the districts where there was inequality and exploitation of oil and gas by the central government.<sup>132</sup> The government strategy in dealing with the insurgents relied heavily on military operations, which also created collateral damage, as the casualties were mostly civilian. Thus it was thus not surprising that the Acehnese's hearts and minds turned to GAM. As a result, GAM gained massive popular support, as was evident in a huge demonstration in which hundreds of thousands of people took to the street in the provincial capital, Banda Aceh, in 1999, demanding Acehnese independence.

The military strategies to deal with GAM, however, remained the same. To separate GAM from the population, the military cut the logistical and communication lines before destroying GAM's military command and civilian infrastructures (see leg 2). Because GAM also established a shadow government, or civilian structures, it was not easy for the military to separate the insurgents from the population, loosen the grip over

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<sup>131</sup> Robert L Taylor, William E. Rosenbach, and Eric B Rosenbach, *Military Leadership: in pursuit of excellence* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009), 122.

<sup>132</sup> Schulze, 256.

them, and win the hearts and minds of the people. GAM could easily blend into the population, not wearing uniforms or carrying weapons. The security forces became frustrated searching for and locating GAM members and this situation led to brutal treatment of the local population. This was due to the difficulties security forces faced in distinguishing GAM from ordinary Acehnese. The security forces began terrorizing the population in order to deter them from supporting GAM. During the period of *Operasi Terpadu* (Integrated Operation) in 2003–2004, the beating and torturing of unarmed civilians and the burning of villages were still taking place.<sup>133</sup> Instead of winning the hearts and minds of the people, again the government failed to address the primary issues of the Aceh conflict.

It is important to know how GAM has been able to defend itself against the stronger opponent for about three decades. As noted, Arrequin-Toft's thesis argues that the governments (the big actors) lose insurgency wars if and when they choose the wrong strategy vis-à-vis the strategy of the insurgents (see leg 3).<sup>134</sup> Toft argues that the insurgents' goal, if they take an indirect approach, is to destroy not the capacity, but the will of the attacker. However, in the Aceh conflict, this does not mean that the military is expected to win when they employ the correct strategy of barbarism, which is defined as the systematic violation of the laws of war to achieve a military or political objective. This definition includes destructive actions against noncombatants such as rape, murder and torture to destroy the insurgent's will and capacity to fight.<sup>135</sup> This is due to the fact that noncombatant casualties would sacrifice the military's reputation and attract international condemnation.

GAM needs two elements to survive; they are physical sanctuary (e.g., mountain, forest or jungle), and supportive population (e.g., logistic and intelligent as well as hiding places). GAM cannot defeat the government armed forces militarily using a direct approach; therefore GAM will seek to destroy the government armed forces' will

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<sup>133</sup> Schulze, 256.

<sup>134</sup> Ivan Arrequin-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict," (International Security, 2001), 95.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 101.

to fight by employing indirect approaches. Since asymmetric was the nature of the Aceh conflict, GAM employed an “indirect approach” to avoid massive contact with the TNI except in circumstances of overwhelming advantages (see leg 3). The GAM strategy also stressed the importance of having the intelligence advantages of the TNI and its strategies. Unlike GAM that could attack TNI by employing techniques such as hit-and-run and ambush to generate great casualties, the TNI could not attack GAM directly since GAM fighters were able to blend into the population. For these reasons, the war tends to be protracted, and GAM gains a time advantage. In a war like this, according to Toft, success is measured by the ability to prosecute a protracted conflict against a superior enemy. GAM has an opportunity to win the war, and the government could possibly lose the war.

Aceh was different from East Timor in terms of its integration into the Republic. Aceh was part of the state of Indonesia ever since its declaration in 1945. Most states, therefore, did not support Aceh’s demand for independence, as it would affect the stability of Indonesia as well as neighboring countries. Just as GAM needed the support of the local people of Aceh, it also needed the support of the international community (see leg 5) to internationalize their struggle to achieve independence. The acts of “internationalization” were intended to put pressure on Indonesia so that GAM was recognized as a legitimate freedom fighter for Aceh’s independence (see leg 4). The direct international support for GAM came from Libya, from 1986 to 1989, in the form of military training.<sup>136</sup> Among the international supporters were Sweden and Norway, who gave political sanctuary to GAM’s top political leadership.<sup>137</sup> In order to sustain its struggle, GAM had to be able to finance itself since there were only a few supporters of its struggle. GAM relied on donations from Acehnese communities in neighboring countries such as Malaysia or Thailand. Standard weapons were obtained from either domestic or foreign sources. The domestic sources of weapons were from Indonesian

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<sup>136</sup> Kell, *The Root*, 73.

<sup>137</sup> Heiberg et. al., *Terror*, 104.

armed forces and the seizure of weapons from attacking army and police posts.<sup>138</sup> Internationally, weapons came largely from Cambodia.<sup>139</sup> The archipelago's porous borders made any attempts to prevent weapon smuggling more difficult. Although hundreds or thousands of weapons were intercepted at sea, the number of weapons that actually reached their destination has always been questioned. Another important aspect of COIN strategy was to cut GAM communication links between Aceh and the GAM leaders in exile; to get in touch with their leaders, GAM's field commanders widely employed satellite phones (see leg 4). One of the reasons for GAM's toughness was that it was able to establish its headquarters in Sweden, which was far from Indonesia, and communicate with GAM's military leaders in Aceh through satellite devices.<sup>140</sup> If the military, in attempting to intercept weapons smuggling, could guard the archipelago's sea borders by using naval warships, it found it very difficult to disrupt these satellite communications (see leg 4).<sup>141</sup>

## **2. Military Operation under the Suharto Era (1977–1998)**

The government was able to neutralize the first GAM rebellion in 1977, but the group managed to renew its activities in 1989. Indonesian security forces during the period of 1990–1998, designated Aceh a *Daerah Operasi Militer* (Military Operation Zone, or DOM). This era was marked by a series of attacks launched by hundreds of Libyan-trained GAM guerillas. They raided military and police posts, confiscated dozens of automatic weapons and thousands of rounds of ammunition in 1990. As GAM attacked the military directly and openly, GAM used the direct strategy of facing the military head-to-head. The McCormick model suggests that in asymmetric warfare like this, GAM's inferior strength did not match up with the TNI. GAM was defeated by the

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<sup>138</sup> Kell, *The Root*, 73.

<sup>139</sup> Kirsten E. Schulze, "The Struggle for an (Arrequin-Toft 2001) Independence Aceh: The Ideology, Capacity, and Strategy of GAM," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (Taylor & Francis, 2003), 258.

<sup>140</sup> Michaelene Cox, *State of Corruption, state of Chaos: the terror of political malfeasance* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008), 129.

<sup>141</sup> Kirsten E. Schulze, "Insurgency and Counter-insurgency: Strategy and the Aceh Conflict, October 1976–May 2004," in *Verandah of Violence*, ed. by Anthony Reid (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006), 252.



military (see leg 3). As a result, President Soeharto ordered the military to destroy GAM in 1990, and the military had an opportunity to win the war. Unfortunately, the order was given without any form of written presidential decree; it was only given verbally.<sup>142</sup> International organizations such as Human Rights Watch (HRW) noted that over one thousand civilians were killed in the first three years of the operation. Tens of thousands of Acehnese were imprisoned and tortured in military camps, rape cases were reportedly widespread, and various human rights violations were also recorded until the end of DOM in 1998.<sup>143</sup>

Although the backbone of GAM's struggle in this period was mostly Libyan-trained fighters, GAM still faced an arms shortage. Initially, the government stated that the situation in Aceh was a purely criminal incident perpetrated by dozens of people including military men.<sup>144</sup> But when the insurgents began increasing military attacks in order to obtain as many weapons as possible, it became a serious concern to the central government. The governor of Aceh during that period, Ibrahim Hasan, was concerned about the deteriorating situation and asked the military to deal with GAM. The military personnel stationed in Aceh were some 6,000 organic troops under two Subregional Military Commands (Korem). In order to suppress GAM quickly, the government additionally deployed an estimated 6,000 troops, including army special forces (Kopassus), bringing the total number to 12,000.<sup>145</sup> The military began establishing *Komando Pelaksana Operasi, Kolaksops* (Field Operation Command), and divided the Aceh province into three areas of responsibility. In addition, the military set up some additional task forces, such as intelligence and marine units, to isolate and destroy the insurgents. By 1990, the massive military operation under the code name *Operasi Jaring Merah* (Operation Red Net), and initially designated it to destroy the rebellion within six months, but it was not over until 1998.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Sukma, 23.

<sup>143</sup> See Human Right Watch report on August 2001, "Indonesia, the war in Aceh," for detail casualties.

<sup>144</sup> Sukma, *Security Operation in Aceh*, 8.

<sup>145</sup> Muthiah Alagappa, *Coercion and governance: the declining political role or the military in Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 241.

<sup>146</sup> Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Violence and the state in Suharto's Indonesia* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program Publications, Cornell University, 2001), 217.

The government labeled GAM the *Gerakan Pengacau Keamanan* (Security Disturbing Movement; GPK); in other words, the government attempted to criminalize GAM and did not recognize GAM as a politically motivated movement, but rather as a military issue. The government refused to acknowledge that the counter-insurgency operation was intended to destroy a separatist movement.<sup>147</sup> In fact, the government tended to deal with GAM by utilizing military forces. Some criticized this policy by saying that the New Order response to rebellion in Aceh was the politics of generalization and stigmatization due to no clear distinction between insurgents and Acehnese.<sup>148</sup> Insurgents were frequently stated to be “everywhere” in the population, and as a result, the military tended to see all Acehnese as potential GAM members.<sup>149</sup> It was not surprising that thousands of Acehnese became victims of the military operations. One of the strategies of the so-called “shock therapy,” such as the dumping of unidentified corpses in roadside and public areas, was commonly known to be conducted by the security forces during the Soeharto administration.<sup>150</sup> Another strategy was *Operasi Pagar Betis* (Operation Fence of Legs) in 1991; this operation employed village people to sweep through a certain area to capture GAM members. Some criticized this as disregarding international law, which forbids the direct use of civilians in combat situations. Although the government was able to reduce the GAM’s strength significantly by killing, capturing, or forcing GAM leaders into exile, the Soeharto regime clearly failed to handle the root causes of the Aceh conflict. These strategies obviously did not treat Aceh’s population as the centre of gravity as suggested on the Diamond model.

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<sup>147</sup> Sukma, 9.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Kell, *The Root*, 66

<sup>150</sup> Drexler, *Aceh, Indonesia*, 101.

### **3. Military Operations after the Suharto Era (1998–2004)**

#### ***a. Habibie Era (1998–1999)***

After the Soeharto regime collapsed, Vice-President Habibie became his successor in 1998. He held office for just a short period of time from 1998–1999 and during those years, the military became the target of criticism especially in connection with various human rights abuses in the past. The fall of Soeharto and the rise of Habibie was a historic event intensely monitored by both the local and international public. The political change in Jakarta affected the Acehnese whereas the stories about the human rights abuses that they suffered for long periods of time were widely reported by the media. This period was marked by the unprecedented freedom of the press, which helped spread information about human rights situation in Aceh. GAM was able to internationalize the abuse of the military operations. GAM managed to depict the military as a human rights violator to the international community (see leg 4). Human rights became a sensitive issue for the government due to international condemnation on how the government of Indonesia handled the East Timor issue.

In response, President Habibie decided to withdraw non-organic military forces from the province and declared the end of the Military Operation Zone (DOM) status for Aceh. President Habibie also made a public apology for what had happened in the past. Although without being officially declared, the imposition of DOM (the order was given verbally by President Soeharto in 1990), the commander-in-chief, General Wiranto, publicly apologized, and “lifted” the Aceh status of DOM on August 7, 1998. He began withdrawing non-organic troops from Aceh and yet his decision did not immediately pacify the province. Despite the official lifting of DOM, the violence escalated, and in fact GAM intensified its activities beyond military targets such as attacking Javanese migrants and suspected Indonesian sympathizers, destroying government buildings, and driving civilians and government employees out of Aceh.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk, Project Air Force (U.S.), “Indonesia’s transformation and the stability of Southeast Asia,” (Santa Monica, RAND, 2001), 31.

The GAM actions were intended to undermine the effectiveness of the government apparatus in Aceh province (see leg 2). This situation forced the government to maintain the presence of the security forces in the province and continue a series of operations to restore order, which was led by the police.

***b. Abdurrahman Wahid Era (1999–2001)***

President Abdurrahman Wahid assumed power through a general election in 1999. The conflict in Aceh continued to deteriorate as the clashes between security forces and GAM intensified. Despite the increasing security issues, efforts to put an end to the conflict through political solutions surfaced. The government began pursuing non-military efforts to foster international support by inviting the third party to assist the government, or at least indicate that the government had the will to resolve the conflict peacefully (see leg 5). As a result, the Wahid administration initiated negotiations by contacting the Henry Dunant Center (HDC), and this resulted in the first talks between the Government of Indonesia, represented by Hasan Wirajuda, the Indonesian ambassador to the UN and GAM leader, Hasan Tiro, in Switzerland on January 27, 2000. Both sides defended their positions; GAM representatives repeatedly stated that they wanted total independence, and Indonesian leaders insisted that negotiations had to occur within the framework of the unitary state of Indonesia. President Abdurrahman himself, then proceeded to meet with the HDC officials on January 30 and generated the signing of a “Joint Understanding on Humanitarian Pause for Aceh,” on May 12. Since this was not a cease-fire, the agreement aimed to allow the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and the conflict still continued in Aceh. In fact, armed clashes, disappearances, killings and other forms of violence became common, and GAM and the military blamed each other for the escalated hostilities. The failure of the agreement was caused by several problems: the military as well as the political elites, since the beginning of the process expressed disagreement, saying that the agreement would put GAM on the same level and equal to the TNI and Polri (Indonesian National Police). GAM, on the other hand, made use of the Humanitarian Pause to expand recruitment and training and even to

collect the so-called “pajak Nanggroe” (taxes), in areas under its control.<sup>152</sup> For this reason, the local military commanders proposed that if the agreement failed to stop violence, then a civil emergency could be declared and military operation would be implemented.<sup>153</sup>

It was apparent that the agreement did not lie in firm foundations as it had during the negotiations, as GAM insisted on pursuing independence for Aceh and escalated the violence by attacking military and police posts, especially around Exxon Mobile, which led to the closure of the plant while the government, and especially the military, wanted to defeat GAM militarily. As a result, President Abdurrahman Wahid issued a Presidential Instruction (Inpres) in April 2001 that authorized an operation known as the *Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan dan Penegakan Hukum* (Operation for Restoring Security and Upholding the Law). In contrast to previous operations, this one aimed at dealing with the Aceh problem in a comprehensive way. Some examples of the operations were *Operasi Wibawa* I-II (Operation Authority) in 1998–1999, *Operation Sadar Rencong* I-III (Operation Rencong Awareness) in 1999–2000, and *Operasi Cinta Meunasah* (Operation Love the Mosque) in 2000–2001. Now the nature of the security operations had changed from that of a military operation to a campaign to restore security and public order. This new law allowed the division of responsibility between the military and the police in Aceh. The military was only a supporting role. It was apparent that the newly elected government attempted to correct the negative impact of military operations in the past, and intended to resolve the Aceh problem by using civil approaches. Although the restore order operation was designated to be led by the police, in reality the military still dominated the COIN operations but were under the umbrella of a police-led operation.<sup>154</sup>

These operations comprised four combat elements from TNI and the police. The first element was the police and the second element was the army territorial

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<sup>152</sup> Edward Aspinall and Harold Crouch, *The Aceh Peace Process: Why it Failed* (Washington D.C.: The East-West Center Washington, 2003), 17.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>154</sup> Sukma, 15.

commands. The third element was *Kostrad*, *Kopassus* and a *Rajawali* (Eagle) Force, as special counter-insurgency units. The fourth element was the Marine Corps and the air force's Special Forces (*Paskhas*). Although officially the operation was headed by the police, in reality, due to lack of training, manpower and equipment to deal with the insurgents, the operations relied on the military. In this era, the excessive use of force in defeating the insurgency was still dominated by non-military measures such as a negotiated political settlement. At the same time, GAM intensified its activities by attacking not only the security forces, but also the targeting and killing of civilian, especially Javanese, migrants. Between May 1999 and April 2000, the highest displacement took place when some 160,000–180,000, mostly Javanese migrants, were displaced from five areas within Aceh such as North Aceh, East Aceh, Central Aceh, West Aceh, and Pidie.<sup>155</sup>

*c. Megawati Era (2001–2004)*

Following the impeachment of President Abdurrahman Wahid in 2001, Vice-President Megawati Soekarnoputri assumed the presidency. Under her administration, a military presence in Aceh became permanently established. Despite some disagreement among the Acehnese, she approved the re-establishment of a regional military command (Kodam) for the province, and named it Kodam Iskandar Muda. She also continued to pursue a non-military solution by resuming talks with GAM in Sweden, and reached a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA) in December 2002. Although COHA was able to reduce the number of people killed, the sporadic clashes continued to occur. In fact, GAM attacked the Joint Security Committee offices in March 2003, indicating that COHA failed to achieve peace in Aceh. President Megawati subsequently issued the Presidential Decree (Kepres) 28/2003, imposing martial law across Aceh, and began the so-called *Operasi Terpadu* (Integrated Operation) to take firm action against GAM, which increasingly grew stronger within the province. The decree marked the

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<sup>155</sup> Ali Aulia Ramly, "A state of Emergency, a Strategy of War: Internal Displacement, Forced Relocation, and Involuntary Return in Aceh." in *Aceh Under Martial Law: Conflict, Violence and Displacement*, ed. by Eva-Lotta E.Hedman (Queen Elizabeth House Departement of International Development, University of Oxford, 2005), 18.

transfer of authority from the civilian governor to the local military commander, in this case, the *Pangdam* (the regional military commander) who acted as *Penguasa Darurat Militer* or PDMD (regional martial law administrator), meaning that the military was the highest government authority in Aceh. The Megawati administration still believed that military operations were the keys for success in conquering GAM. The nature of the counter-insurgency operations in this period were to face the GAM military by reducing GAM military strength in the hope that it could be defeated militarily.

Based on this decree, the military began launching a massive military operation. Many believe that in terms of the number of troops, this was the biggest offensive since the East Timor invasion in 1975. Unlike the 1990s military operations, which were without a legal presidential decree, this *Operasi Terpadu* enjoyed strong support from the parliament, all the political leaders, and the non-Acehnese Indonesian public in general.<sup>156</sup> Although, the operation was expected to last only six months, as authorized by the decree, its extension was unlimited. The operation, however, was not immune from criticism. The International Crisis Group (ICG) stated that the military criteria for success in this effort seemed to be the number of GAM killed, arrested, and surrendered, and the number of weapons confiscated.<sup>157</sup> By the end of the first six months of the operation, the military claimed to have killed 1,106 rebels, arrested 1,544, had 504 surrendered, and 488 weapons had been seized.<sup>158</sup> Although the operation was able to suppress and reduced the GAM's military strength significantly, it was clear that *Operasi Terpadu* was not aimed at treating the root causes of the Aceh problems. There was still a possibility that GAM would come back again in the future. In other words, if the government still relied heavily on using military approaches to manage the Aceh conflict, the government would still find it difficult to win the hearts and minds of the Acehnese.

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<sup>156</sup> Sukma, 23.

<sup>157</sup> Cited in Sukma, 24.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

## **C. ANALYSIS**

The fight between GAM and the Indonesian security forces was asymmetrical in terms of personnel numbers, equipment, strategy and tactics. Indonesian security forces not only outnumbered GAM, but they were also better equipped and trained. If the military had the force advantages, GAM, had the advantages of information, better knowledge of the terrain and local support, which allowed it to hit the military fairly frequently. As the conflict tended to be protracted due to its low intensity, the military employed ineffective counter-insurgency (COIN) strategies. The Soeharto administration fought GAM by using primarily military options to wipe out the rebels. Only after the fall of Soeharto in 1998, did both GAM and the government attempt to solve their dispute through political, diplomatic and legal means.

I will analyze both GAM's insurgent strategies and the government's COIN strategies in responding to GAM activities in Aceh by using the Diamond Model. My analysis will be based upon the facts that since the government launched military operations in 1977, up until 1998 there were no serious negotiation attempts, and between 1998 and 2004, no successful agreement had been achieved that would address the primary causes of the Aceh conflict. With the removal of the special region in the 1950s and the social and economic imbalance, the feeling of exploitation and oppression remained unresolved. Unfortunately, the government's past failure to hold negotiations with GAM to its advantage meant that the next options must be military operations. Although the government enjoyed widespread international support for the unity and integrity of the Republic, many criticized the government's COIN efforts' lack of an exit strategy and the failure to apply non-military approaches in any of its operations.

### **1. The Strategy of GAM**

As is shown in Figure 3 (Diamond model), in order to win the struggle, GAM has to pay more attention to winning the hearts and minds of the people, attacking the government infrastructure and the army or security forces, undermining external support for the government, and at the same time, foster international support for its advantages.



Since GAM's first attempt at subverting the New Order regime, its strategies have been comprised of two elements, the guerilla struggle and the strategy of internationalization through political means.<sup>159</sup> GAM focused its strategy of internationalization on the efforts to create an East Timor-like scenario that would compel the international community to pressure the GoI to separate Aceh from Indonesia. To undermine external support for GoI (see leg 4), GAM lobbied international human rights groups, depicted Indonesia's security forces as human rights violators, and urged an international fact-finding mission to be sent to Aceh to investigate the crimes against humanity that have taken place and are being committed in Aceh.<sup>160</sup> GAM also mobilized public opinion against the government by denouncing and provoking military repression as well as focusing on the military's human rights violations.<sup>161</sup> GAM also employed a strategy to disable the local government infrastructure, and if possible, replace it with GAM's own institutions (see leg 2). Hundreds of schools have been burned down, and a numbers of teachers killed. Many local politicians and civil servants were also murdered or recruited into GAM's parallel government structure. As a result, by 2001, as much 80 percent of Aceh's villages were under GAM's control, and almost all government infrastructure had stopped functioning.<sup>162</sup>

GAM implemented the tactics of avoiding strength and striking at weakness. These tactics required good intelligence as a decisive factor in planning guerilla operations to locate the military unit position. Here, as shown in leg 3, GAM's tactics were mostly hit-and-run ambushes followed by withdrawal into the mountains or blending among the population. As Mao put it, "if we do not have a 100 percent guarantee of victory, we should not fight a battle; ...when the enemy is well armed and

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<sup>159</sup> Schulze, 226.

<sup>160</sup> Kirsten E. Schulze, "GAM: Gerakan Aceh Merdeka" in *Terror, insurgency, and the state: ending protracted conflicts*, ed. by Marianne Heiberg, Brendan O'Leary and John Tirman ( Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 95.

<sup>161</sup> Ross, 49.

<sup>162</sup> Ross, 50

his troops numerous and courageous, we have to evade clashes.”<sup>163</sup> Due to GAM’s superior information, most clashes between the security forces and GAM were under the conditions of its own choosing. GAM had superior knowledge of the terrain; they were able to use it to their advantage and the Indonesia security forces’ confusion. GAM’s guerilla tactics are to fight only when the chances of victory are in their favor; they will withdraw if the outcome of the battle is unpredictable.

The Indonesian military, on the other hand, should have known how to handle GAM’s guerilla strategy militarily, as the insurgents were repeatedly crushed by the military, and yet their resistance revived again and again. In asymmetric warfare like this, GAM’s strategy was to exploit the vulnerability of the Indonesia security forces (see leg 3). GAM attempted to counterbalance its strength by modifying the strategic usage of its very limited fighting force. Many observers assessed that GAM members generally showed little military skill or discipline, and most would be easy prey for military attacks. GAM’s fighters, however, had an extensive network of informers and look-outs with good communications who were able to provide superior intelligence and an early warning system of any military or police movement. GAM fighters frequently conducted ambushes of convoys and raids on military offices and police stations and murdered some police and soldiers. The government, on the other hand, conducted the war based on a lack of military intelligence about Aceh’s sociological knowledge. The military had insufficient intelligence and awareness of the Acehnese sociological situation. Kell argues that the military’s strategy concentrated on the use of “shock therapy,” a campaign of terror designed to create fear among the population and make them withdraw their support for GAM.<sup>164</sup> As a result, during the DOM period, the security forces tortured and killed thousands of Acehnese, resulting in useless destruction, as the collateral

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<sup>163</sup> Mao Tse-Tung, “Basic Tactics,” in *Rebellion and Authority: An Analytic Essay on Insurgent Conflicts*, written by Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf, Jr. (Chicago: Markham Publishing Company, 1970), 63. (Lehr 2006)

<sup>164</sup> Kell, *The Root*, 74.

damage was mostly civilians, and generating movement and resentment toward the Indonesian government, especially the military.<sup>165</sup>

In terms of the diplomatic struggle, as mentioned before, GAM's agenda was to internationalize the conflict (see leg 5). For example, GAM approached international organizations such as the United Nations and the European Union, and governments sympathetic to GAM, such as Sweden and Norway. GAM's goal was to get them involved and to recognize GAM as legitimate freedom fighters rather than a mere separatist movement. However, the guerillas gained confidence and professionalism after hundreds of GAM fighters received military training in Libya in the mid-1980s. The active members of GAM grew considerably over time. The first GAM rebellion from 1976 until 1979 consisted of only 25–200 active guerilla fighters. The fighting capacity increased after Libyan “graduates” trained new members from 1989 until 1991; the active members numbered several hundreds and reached its peak at around 15,000–27,000 fighters in 2004. Its arsenal also increased dramatically to some 2,234 weapons, especially during the 2002–3 Cessation of hostilities Agreement (CoHA).<sup>166</sup> Because of the shortage of firearms, GAM also mixed its arsenal with self-manufactured guns. But the problem of ammunition remained, GAM was unable make it without precision machinery, which had to be imported from other countries such as Thailand or Java.<sup>167</sup> This situation forced GAM to disappear into the jungle for long periods of time, and re-emerge later when the time permitted.

The security forces should have anticipated GAM's provocations. In 2000, as the round of talks in Geneva had put the Aceh issue under the international spotlight, GAM tried to undermine external support for GoI by provoking the government to use military options in Aceh (see leg 4). GAM intensified its attacks involving civilian targets,

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<sup>165</sup> Dan G. Cox, “Political Terrorism and Democratic and Economic Development,” in *Democratic development & Political Terrorism*, ed. by William J. Crotty (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2005), 261.

<sup>166</sup> Schulze, 227; Ross, 36.

<sup>167</sup> Michaelene Cox, *State of Corruption, state of chaos: the terror of political malfeasance* (Lanham: Lexington Book, 2008), 137.

destroying government buildings, piracy and kidnapping for ransom.<sup>168</sup> These attacks forced the government to reschedule the implementation of special autonomy for Aceh province. GAM apparently knew that the security forces were not in their best state of readiness for a protracted asymmetric war. GAM attempted to internationalize every incident involving civilian casualties to offset the government's legitimacy. GAM had learned that the Santa Cruz incident in 1991 had badly hurt Indonesia's reputation in handling East Timor. The destruction of Dili in 1999 was the turning point of that legitimacy. GAM was patiently waiting for Indonesia's security forces to repeat such mistakes sooner or later in Aceh. In the GAM's calculation, if such incidents were repeated again, Indonesia would lose its legitimacy and GAM would win international sympathy. In the case of the Aceh conflict, the COIN strategies, therefore, must be focused on winning the hearts and minds of the people.

## **2. The Strategy of the Government**

The government should have realized that social discontent was at the heart of any insurgency and that winning the people's hearts and minds was the primary goal of the COIN strategy to reduce the local population's support for the separatists (see leg 1). That was a key ingredient for success in combating insurgency in Aceh. Many criticized that the government appeared to have no clear objective in this conflict, no criteria for "success" except control of territory and body count, and had no exit strategy.<sup>169</sup> The government's COIN strategy typically used all its effort to crush GAM as soon as possible, once and for all, and without pursuing any non-military solutions.

When President Wahid was in power, however, he began pursuing non-military approaches. From GAM's perception at this time, the international community was its savior, and the GoI found itself in trauma over the international role of the independence of East Timor. President Wahid's effort to involve a foreign facilitator to open dialogue

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<sup>168</sup> Peter Lehr, *Violence at Sea: piracy in the age of global terrorism* (New York, London: Routledge, 2006), 148.

<sup>169</sup> International Crisis Group, "Aceh: How not to win the hearts and minds," (Jakarta/Brussels, 23 July 2003), 1.

with the exiled GAM leadership to hold negotiations was not supported by the political elite or the military leaders. In 1999, the East Timorese were granted a UN-supervised referendum to decide whether they would accept special autonomy within Indonesia or choose independence. East Timor and Aceh were completely different in terms of their historical background. The clear distinction was that the United Nations had never recognized Indonesia's occupation of the territory. Aceh, on the other hand, had always been recognized as part of modern Indonesia as it was stated in the Round Table Conference agreement in 1949 as a transfer of sovereignty from the Netherlands to Indonesia. In the case of Aceh (see leg 5), it seemed that the government lacked a strategy to convince the international community that the Aceh problem was a separatist threat, and not the extended human rights violations, so that the government had a legitimate right to defend its territorial integrity, sovereignty by any means necessary, either militarily or politically.

Unfortunately, the military apparently set the success criteria to be the number of GAM killed, arrested and surrendered, and tended to exercise a direct strategy (see leg 3). Even superpowers such the United States did not win the war in Vietnam when body count was introduced to determine the success or failure of the war effort by General William Westmoreland.<sup>170</sup> As McCormick stated, the COIN strategy put the population as a center of gravity (COG) meaning that all the effort was to be concentrated on winning the hearts and minds of the people (see leg 1). Unfortunately, it was not easy to determine whether those killed were GAM fighters or ordinary Acehnese. The civilian casualties were hard to avoid, as the guerillas blended in the population. Without uniforms, they were very much like ordinary Acehnese. The problems on the ground made it difficult for the military to draw a clear distinction between guerilla fighters and civilians. Here, as what happened in the field due to the shortage of arms, the GAM

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<sup>170</sup> David L. Andersen, *The Columbia guide to the Vietnam War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 57.

fighters comprised some ten to twelve people and it could be that only four to six of them were equipped with arms. As they became involved in combat situations and some of the armed rebels were shot down by the military, the survivors of the fighting grabbed their fallen comrades' arms, and let them without arms. This frequently took place in Aceh, making it difficult for the military to defend its position that they had shot the GAM combatants and not ordinary Aceh people.

The strategy that the military employed in Aceh was mainly to locate and decapitate the GAM leadership. The effort to separate the people from GAM became the key objective in every COIN operation. The classic strategy of the military was to comb the villages in an attempt to push GAM back into the jungle in the hopes of cutting the link between GAM and the population (see leg 2). The TNI also tried to cut off GAM's logistical supply by preventing it from obtaining weapons that were allegedly smuggled through coastal regions as well as from other areas (see leg 4). As a result, after the six month period of the 2003 *Operasi Terpadu* (Integrated Operation), the TNI claimed that almost 50 percent of GAM's five thousand personnel had either been killed or captured, and 459 of some 2,000 weapons owned by GAM were confiscated.<sup>171</sup> The police statistics regularly showed that the death toll between GAM and the civilian population indicated only slightly more civilians than rebels. An example of that occurred in June 2003 when the police revealed that 124 civilians and 109 GAM had been killed.<sup>172</sup> The discrepancy of statistics, as the International Crisis Group (ICG) argues, was apparently due to the fact that the military and the police had their own definitions regarding GAM and civilians. Besides, there was no opportunity for an independent verification to identify whether or not those killed were GAM.<sup>173</sup> As a result, since President Megawati took power, many believed that the central government leaders were more

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<sup>171</sup> Leonard Sebastian, *Realpolitik Ideology: Indonesia's use of Military force* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006), 144.

<sup>172</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG), 6.

<sup>173</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG), 6.

concerned with the elimination of separatism than with the search for a democratic solution to the Aceh conflict. Her administration relied far more heavily on military operations.<sup>174</sup>

#### **D. SUMMARY**

The counter-insurgency campaign in Aceh in the mid-1990s created a deep resentment toward the Acehnese. An analysis of the counter-insurgency using the Diamond model suggests that the use of excessive force generated levels of oppression among the Acehnese. Instead of defeating GAM militarily, the military stimulated a deep-rooted anger and hatred among the population. The strategies employed by the government depended heavily on its military power and were shaped by a specific historical context. At that time, military options were the key to suppress the rebellions throughout the archipelago. But, the “one-size fits all” strategy cannot be adopted for all problems in Indonesia. Aceh has distinct characteristics compared to other areas of the archipelago. The Aceh historical background showed us how the Acehnese dealt with the foreign powers from when it was under the sultanate until its incorporation into the Republic, and this should have been taken into consideration when trying to resolve problems in Aceh.

The military strategy is comprised of three steps, the separation of GAM from the people, isolation, and neutralization. The separation of GAM from the people, as suggested by the Diamond model, was not done correctly by the military as the GAM enjoyed much support in the villages and urban areas. The TNI also faced difficulties cutting off GAM’s logistical supply completely, and only limited the flow of GAM logistical supply. The next step, to isolate GAM from the population, began with forcing GAM away from villages and then the elimination of GAM fighters. The classic counter-insurgency to destroy GAM, as discussed above, generated thousands of GAM personnel that had either been captured or killed, and thousands of weapons that had been

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<sup>174</sup> Michelle Ann Miller, *Rebellion and Reform in Indonesia: Jakarta’s Security and Autonomy Policies in Aceh* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2009), 102.

confiscated. The conflict, however, did not show any signs of ending. Many criticized the government for failing to understand how to implement an integrated operation. The “Operasi Terpadu” (Integrated Operation) should have included non-military options such as humanitarian aid and development assistance, as many suggested. The primary Acehese grievance was that the government had not yet adequately addressed the various unjust policies of the past.

The fall of the Soeharto regime marked the transition from an authoritarian to democratic government, but it did not have much effect on the strategy employed by the government. Despite the fact that the Aceh conflict was a combination of social, economic, political and armed insurgency, the government tended to rely heavily on military operations to resolve it. From the period of the DOM (1990–1998), for example, the military launched *Operasi Jaring Merah* (Operation Red Net) to destroy the rebels. The military was having a hard time avoiding human rights violations during this period. Instead of defeating GAM militarily, the government failed to maintain popular support; in fact, GAM was able to develop a significant popular base, a sustainable flow of arms to Aceh, and a well-managed command structure. GAM was able to increase and expand from the small areas into the rest of Aceh, and successfully controlled between 70 and 80 percent of the province, including local government, through their shadow civil service structure.<sup>175</sup> As a result, the main causes of the Aceh conflict were not addressed, and in fact, the military approaches to solving the Aceh conflict alienated much of the Acehese society, especially during the DOM period. The security approaches adopted by the central government heightened the conflict. GAM began as a small guerilla band gaining popular support because of the brutal measures undertaken by the military in combating the rebels. In fact, people who joined with GAM in its armed struggle were those whose family members were killed or tortured by the security forces or had witnessed such brutality. The security forces did not know how to win the hearts and minds of the

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<sup>175</sup> Andreas Ufen, “Staatsschwache als e Erbe der Diktatur-Die Ausflosung des militarisch dominierten Gewaltoligopols in Indononesien,” in *Multiple Unsicherheit: Befunde aus Asien, Nahost, Afrika und Lateinamerika* ed by Matthias Baseau, Hnaspeter Mattes, Anika Oettler, (Hamburg, Deutsches Uebersee-Institute (DUI), 2005), 74.



Acehnese people. The degree of repressiveness transformed GAM from a guerilla force to a popular resistance movement. It was clear that the government did not treat Aceh's population as the center of gravity in its counter-insurgency operations was suggested in the Diamond model.

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## IV. POLITICAL APPROACHES

### A. INTRODUCTION

Since the first rebellion in 1976, GAM leader Hasan Tiro employed rhetoric indicating that Aceh had a distinct historical and cultural heritage that differed from the rest of the archipelago as the central argument of his secessionist movement. In the eyes of Aceh's separatist movement, a referendum similar to the one held in East Timor was the only way to Acehnese independence. After seeing East Timor's success, the Acehnese demanded the same policy, but the GoI resisted and the conflict escalated. The government realized that granting referendum rights on Aceh might stimulate similar demands in other regions, and could even lead to the breakup of the country. The GoI in general, and especially the military (TNI), supported harsh measures against GAM. However, the issues that prompted the rebellion from the beginning were never taken care of, and a lot of civilian casualties were reported as collateral damage of military operations. The international public demanded peaceful measures to bring to an end the conflict, a military withdrawal, and the end of human rights violations. As a result, the Aceh conflict became the focus of international attention.

As the conflict became an international issue, GAM became increasingly known internationally due to its use of the internet. The overwhelming use of military force led to the condemnation of the military approach to solve the Aceh problem. A series of political settlements were negotiated and implemented after the downfall of the Soeharto regime, but all failed. Some believe that the failure was due to the military not wanting to talk with separatist rebels.<sup>176</sup> From the Indonesian military (TNI) perspective, GAM should have accepted Aceh's status as a province within the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). GAM leaders, however, realized that they could only expect to win independence through negotiations, because GAM military forces numbered only a few thousand poorly-armed men. GAM could only prevent the TNI from winning the war.

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<sup>176</sup> Aspinall and Crouch, *The Aceh Peace Process*, 2.

Since GAM could not defeat the Indonesian forces, and there was no international support for Acehese independence. For these reasons, Aceh needed a different solution, the constructive conflict resolution.

## **B. CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

### **1. Constructive Conflict Resolution**

According to Kriesberg, the escalation of a conflict is not necessarily destructive.<sup>177</sup> But in the case of the Aceh conflict, the conflict between the Government of Indonesia (GoI) and GAM tended to be intractable and destructive claiming tens of thousands of lives. After drawing lessons from the achievements and failings of the 2000–2003 peace process, the participants of this conflict began considering an alternative course of action. The de-escalation of the Aceh conflict was accelerated by the massive natural disaster in which struck the Aceh province at end of 2004, an event which also contributed to both sides considering negotiations and allowing the flow of international aid coming to the Aceh province. This chapter will focus on processes and conditions fostering the de-escalation of conflict. The table below shows the conflict components and destructiveness that occurred in the Aceh conflict that might lead to the escalation or de-escalation of the conflict. The Aceh conflict moved from destructive to a more constructive settlement, especially after the massive disaster that hit Aceh; the province was among the areas hardest hit, claiming some two hundred thousand people. I will use Kriesberg's conflict components such as identity, grievance, goals and methods to conclude that the Aceh conflict tended to be more constructive over time.

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<sup>177</sup> Louis Kriesberg, *Constructive Conflict, from Escalation to Resolution* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 155.

<i>Components</i>	<i>More Destructive</i>	<i>More Constructive</i>
Identity	The base of GAM's struggle for independence: ethno-nationalism (racial exclusivity), Acehnese have different identity than the rest of the Republic. Defining self by opposing other, for instance, GAM attempted to drive thousands of Javanese migrants out of the Aceh province.	The Acehnese had a strong identity with Islam, and supported the newly established Republic. The Acehnese wanted a special region status for the Aceh province.
Grievance	GAM leaders used issues such as Aceh's natural resources exploitation, and economic marginalization to create negative sentiment toward the central government. The government, on the other hand, tended to address the Aceh problem through military settlement, and led to human rights violations	The GoI implemented policies to address the root causes of the Aceh problem.
Goals	Zero-sum conflict, and seek destruction of other: GAM wanted full independence for Aceh; the GoI insisted that Aceh would be in the framework of the unitary state.	Assume to be in mixed-sum conflict, or win-win solution. Both sides seek cooperative solution through negotiations.
Methods	GAM leaders believe armed struggle could achieve the Aceh independence. The GoI wanted to defeat GAM militarily. Indiscriminate violence allowed	GAM and the GoI believe non-coercive means possible to settle the dispute Use of violence greatly limited

Table 2. Conflict Component and Destructiveness<sup>178</sup>

If we examine the progress of the Aceh conflict, it can be concluded that the conflict has escalated for two reasons over the years. First, the Acehnese demanded the implementation of autonomy and Islamic law, directed by Daud Beureuh of the Darul Islam (DI), which then became a demand for total independence, led by Hasan Tiro, the GAM leader. Second, GAM started as a small guerilla band in 1976, and the government always chose military options. Instead of the problem being solved quickly, these policies generated the emergence of a nationalist sentiment. As the conflict had a tendency to escalate, the government tended to respond to the ethno-nationalist

<sup>178</sup> Kriesberg, *Constructive Conflict*, 156. This model is a modification from Kriesberg's model.

movements as direct threats to the concept of the unitary state of Indonesia, and therefore thought they should be crushed by military power. Tiro attempted to construct a racial distinction and exclusivity. After such an ideological identity has been constructed, the result was that most Indonesians were unable to understand Acehnese narrow-mindedness, and most Acehnese were unable to understand Indonesia. Henders argues many Acehnese are trapped within a definition of themselves as a pressured minority, which focused on a widespread sense of lost greatness, but also the feeling that today's struggle continues an earlier history.<sup>179</sup> As a result, the conflict was likely to be more destructive. For example, the violence led by GAM fighters against Javanese migrants generated the massive displacement of almost two hundred thousand people between 1999 and 2000.<sup>180</sup>

Sukma also argues that strong reliance on the New Order development strategy impacted the environment, economically and socially. The natural resources exploitation created a problem in Aceh. With its abundant natural resources such as oil, natural gas, timber, and precious minerals, Aceh contributed around 11 percent of Indonesia's national revenue, and some U.S. \$2.6 billion a year from liquid natural gas (LNG) alone.<sup>181</sup> Ironically, Aceh was among the poorest provinces in Indonesia. In this case, the government obviously ignored the welfare of the people who owned the natural resources. Not only were natural resources being exploited, human rights were also being disregarded. Robinson criticized that the COIN operations in Aceh were conducted at a time when the New Order leaders had reason to believe that the brutal methods used

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<sup>179</sup> Susan J. Henders, *Democratization and Identity: Regimes and Ethnic in East and Southeast Asia* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 59; Indonesia Resources and Information Programme, "Inside Indonesia: Bulletin of the Indonesia Resources and Information Programme (IRIP)," (Northcote, IRIP, 1983–2007), 6.

<sup>180</sup> Ali Aulia Ramly, "A state of Emergency, a Strategy of War: Internal Displacement, Forced Relocation, and Involuntary Return in Aceh," in *Aceh Under Martial Law: Conflict, Violence and Displacement*, ed. by Eva-Lotta E. Hedman (Queen Elizabeth House Department of International Development, University of Oxford, 2005), 18.

<sup>181</sup> Rizal Sukma, "Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia, Causes and the Quest for Solution," in *Ethnic Conflict in Southeast Asia*, ed. by Kusuma Sanitwong Na' Ayutthaya and W. Scott Thompson (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, 2005), 15.

in East Timor, Iran Jaya (Papua) and other “trouble spots” had worked. Under the same conditions, they felt confident that the same methods could be used to generate a similar effect in Aceh.

The extensive use of violence generated levels of insecurity and political violence far greater than anything that could have been done by GAM, who had, itself, created long term consequences, and stimulated a deep-seated anger among Acehnese.<sup>182</sup> The Aceh conflict tended to escalate as indicated by an increase in the number of active GAM members from the first, second, and third emergences. The Acehnese also tended to support GAM as shown by the massive demonstration in the capital city of Banda Aceh, which demanded a referendum in 1999. When both parties attempted to solve the conflict through non-violence and settlements during the 2000–2003 Geneva talks, the results were far from satisfactory. The talks were able to lower violence only marginally, but were not able to halt the conflict permanently. At this stage, the role of a third party became crucial due to the fact that a distrust emerged between the adversaries. The entry of a third party, such as the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) allowed both parties to restore peace negotiations. GAM subsequently wanted to discuss arrangements other than independence. For the government of Indonesia’s perspective, anything is possible to reach an agreement as long as GAM abandons its goal of total independence.

The involvement of a third party in the peace process contributed to the de-escalation of the conflict. In addition, the, Acehnese suffered the most in the conflict, many of them tired of the conflict and they wanted the conflict to be resolved peacefully. The Acehnese, who suffered from both the tsunami and the armed conflict garnered empathy and sympathy from the international community. As Kriesberg put it, sympathizing and empathizing are social psychological processes that significantly contribute to conflict de-escalation. Empathy includes precisely perceiving the other person’s feelings and thoughts relating to the conflict, as well as experiencing the other

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<sup>182</sup> Geoffrey Robinson, “Rawan is as Rawan Does: The Origins of Disorder in New Order Aceh,” in *Violence and the State in Suharto’s Indonesia*, ed. by Benedict R. O’G Anderson (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2001), 240.

people's feelings and thoughts as if they were their own.<sup>183</sup> The tsunami disaster in 2005, which claimed almost two hundred thousand Acehnese prompted the sympathy of the international community and forced the two adversaries to de-escalate the conflict to give way to the international aid that flowed into Aceh province. The GoI and GAM had a common goal, seeking a cooperative solution through negotiations, and believed that a non-coercive means was the best way to address the Aceh conflict.

## **2. Peace Negotiations**

### ***a. Peace Settlement in the First Rebellion***

Many scholars agree that the initial diagnosis of Aceh's problem put the blame on the central government rather than on Acehnese society itself. As previously discussed, the Aceh conflict was based on a sense that Aceh was the hero of the revolutionary war, and had been marginalized. The central government also disregarded the Acehnese identity as devout Muslims who proudly referred to their province as *Serambi Mekah* (Verandah of Mecca). There were open demands in Aceh for the creation of an Islamic state, and by 1953, Daud Beureuh established a paramilitary organization and contacted Kartosuwiryo, the Darul Islam leader in West Java. On September 21, 1953, Daud Beureuh formally linked Aceh to the Islamic Indonesian State (NII, Negara Islam Indonesia) and joined the DI rebellion. For the DI rebels in Aceh, Islam was fundamental and indivisible for Indonesia; therefore, the DI rejected the idea of the Pancasila principles of the Indonesian Republic. Islam covers all aspects of public and private life. From this DI perspective, Islam was not merely faith but also ideology, therefore, establishing the Islamic state of Indonesia was an obligation for all Muslims. The conflict escalated because Daud Beureuh tended to favor forceful resistance to achieve his goal.

In order to reduce the tension between Aceh and the central government, the government employed the non-military method of granting Aceh the status of Special

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<sup>183</sup> Kriesberg, *Constructive Conflict*, 190.



Province in 1959, with autonomy in terms of religion, *hukum adat* (customary law) and education. Daud Beureuh agreed to negotiate his goal, from the implementation of Islamic law for the Indonesian state, in general, to be Islamic law in Aceh, in particular.<sup>184</sup> Although peace was reached in Aceh as Daud Beureuh's ideological stance softened, Masyumi, DI and other Islamists failed to achieve an Islamic state in Indonesia. At that time, Islamic radical movements were considered part of the problem that hampered unity in the nation. By 1960, Islamist movements had been marginalized; the Soekarno administration with the so-called *Demokrasi Terpimpin* (Guided Democracy) (1957–1965) employed the Indonesian armed forces effectively to overcome various national problems including Islamic-based revolts. The military leaderships, on the other hand, favored a secular idea and gave their support to Soekarno's Pancasila doctrine. This was reasonable since members of the Indonesian armed forces came from different backgrounds, and tended to reflect the sub-cultural background of those areas.<sup>185</sup> The Indonesian army had an important role in curbing the Darul Islam-inspired rebellions by employing counter-insurgency campaigns. Aceh's first rebellion, however, ended peacefully through negotiation instead of military defeat. The armed rebellion as DI's method to establish an Islamic state as its goal was brought to an end in 1962. Daud Beureuh was not killed in the military campaign or executed, but surrendered and was granted amnesty.<sup>186</sup>

#### ***b. Peace Settlement under President Habibie***

The collapse of the Soeharto administration in May 1998 marked the emergence of the popular movement to eradicate corruption, collusion and nepotism (KKN), promote democratization and renew civil-military relations. At the same time, the provinces demanded greater autonomy and a larger share of the natural resources

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<sup>184</sup> Michelle Ann Miller, "What's Special about Special Autonomy in Aceh?" in *Verandah of Violence, The Background to the Aceh Problem*, ed. by Anthony Reid (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004), 295.

<sup>185</sup> Federspiel, "The Military and Islam," 410.

<sup>186</sup> Cornelis van Dijk, *Rebellion under the Banner of Islam: the Darul Islam in Indonesia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), 269.

revenue. B.J Habibie, Soeharto's Vice President assumed the presidency in August 1998. He then launched a phenomenal decision for the status of East Timor. As Jemadu put it, Habibie's decision as part of his own political calculations, in the hopes of distancing himself from the authoritarian image of the Soeharto regime, promoted some democratic styles in his policies such as freedom of the press, the establishment of independent political parties, the imposition of new regional autonomy laws, the release of political prisoners, and the promise of a fair and democratic general election in 1999 to address the Acehese grievances.<sup>187</sup> In term of the secessionist movements, he offered two choices to the East Timorese, either integration or separation from the Indonesian state a referendum. His decision intensified the ethno-nationalist struggles against the Indonesian state, including Aceh's secessionist movement. East Timor had a clearly distinctive history of forced incorporation into the Indonesian nation. Aceh, however, has always been an integral part of the Republic as the Acehese indicated when they joined their fellow nationalist youth organizations to drive the Dutch out of the archipelago. President Habibie attempted to resolve Aceh's conflict through different methods such as sending human rights investigators, and releasing hundreds of Acehese political prisoners, as well as reducing the military presence in the province by withdrawing non-organic security forces. The military leaders also wanted to pacify the Acehese as was demonstrated by the Chief of the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) General Wiranto in August 1998. He went to Aceh to apologize for what the TNI had done in Aceh in the past, especially during the period of the enactment of Daerah Operasi Militer (DOM, Military Operation Zone).

In addition to de-escalating the center-periphery tensions, his administration also used non-coercive means, and the use of violence was greatly limited. He launched a decentralization policy by introducing various autonomy laws. The most important of the laws, which was only applied to Aceh, was Law No. 44 of 1999 that was also known as "Special Status of the Province of Aceh Special Region." This law was

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<sup>187</sup> Aleksius Jemadu, "Democratisation, the Indonesian Armed Forces and the Resolving of the Aceh Conflict," in *Verandah of Violence*, ed. by Anthony Reid (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004), 277.

undoubtedly similar to the previous one, which was granted in 1959 as a part of the Darul Islam settlement, allowing Aceh autonomy in terms of its religious, cultural and educational affairs. As Gibbon and Miller pointed out, the implementation of this law was based on the assumption that the 1959 law failed to satisfy the Acehnese.<sup>188</sup> The government believed that Law No. 44 of 1999 was the key to reducing the discontent between Aceh and Jakarta and affected popular support for GAM. The implementation of Islamic law alone, however, failed to deal with the primary issue. Acehnese were, indeed, happy to welcome Islamic law as they demanded for so long, but they needed more than that; human rights and profit-sharing as well as independence were more crucial issues among Acehnese society. Many criticized the government decision to implement Islamic law as a poor strategy as GAM leaders, *ulama* and student groups no longer pursued the Islamic state as they had in 1950s and 1960s. GAM used Islam merely as a symbol and to gain popular support to create basic ethno-nationalist feelings which helped it deliver its message of referendum and independence. Although Habibie tried to implement various democratic methods, he failed to convince the Acehnese to remain part of the Indonesian state. GAM, on the other hand, demanded a referendum and was inspired by Habibie's approval of a referendum for East Timor.

*c. Peace Settlement under President Abdurrahman Wahid*

Habibie's successor, Abdurrahman Wahid, was the first elected President of Indonesia after the fall of the Soeharto regime in 1998. Many expected that the Wahid administration would settle the separatism issue in Aceh, Papua and East Timor with a more constructive resolution as before being elected president, Wahid was a prominent democratic figure. He was also known to be a longstanding opponent of the Soeharto regime. Like Habibie's move, Wahid made a statement supporting a referendum for Aceh. His decision, however, had little support from the military due to the bitter lessons of internationalization from the East Timor conflict leading to its separation from Indonesia. The People's Representative Council (DPR) also expressed disagreement by

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<sup>188</sup> Miller, 298; Rodd McGibbon, "Local Leadership and the Aceh Conflict," in *Verandah of Violence*, ed. by Anthony Reid (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004), 332.

removing all references to a referendum for resolving the Aceh conflict. For these reasons, Wahid then turned his decision to initiate dialogue with GAM. His conciliatory approach in 2000, which was brokered by the newly-established Henry Dunant Center (HDC), lasted a relatively short period of time.

The GAM representatives in the negotiations insisted on their goal of total independence, but the Indonesian representatives believed that the peace talks could only be achieved within the framework of a unitary state. The HDC expected that the dialogues focus on the humanitarian issues since the conflict claimed a large number of human casualties. The HDC initiative was supported by the international community in general, and by the United States as well as the European Union in particular. In the talks, both sides acknowledged that the government could not crush GAM militarily, and that GAM had no prospects for defeating the military.<sup>189</sup> From GAM's perspective, regardless of the outcome, it had managed to internationalize the issue in the hopes that the United States and the European Union would put pressure on Indonesia to grant independence to Aceh. GAM leaders had long sought this opportunity to internationally disclose the human right abuses that were taking place in Aceh. For the government, this was also the opportunity to show, internationally, that it was serious about handling human rights issues and internal conflicts at a time when its reputation was badly damaged by the East Timor case.

In May 2000, the government and GAM representatives signed a "Joint Understanding on Humanitarian Pause for Aceh," to promote "confidence-building" measure toward a peaceful solution to the conflict situation in Aceh. The Humanitarian pause was a ceasefire, a three-month accord designed to halt the fighting and to allow the distribution of humanitarian assistance to the Acehnese. The government representative was Hasan Wirajuda, who was an Indonesian ambassador to the UN, and Hasan Tiro for the GAM. Many Indonesians, especially the military, expressed disagreement with the negotiation because they believed that GAM should not be treated as equal to the TNI-Polri (Indonesian National Police). The reason was that it could create a precedent that

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<sup>189</sup> Aspinall and Crouch, *The Aceh Peace Process*, 11.

might implicitly recognize GAM as an “international actor,” and would invite “international forces to intervene.”<sup>190</sup> The widespread criticisms of the Humanitarian Pause were not baseless as there were many reports on the ground that GAM used the pause to expand recruitment and training as well as collect taxes in the areas under its control.<sup>191</sup> The reality was that GAM used this opportunity to regroup and rearm.<sup>192</sup> This was a clear indication that GAM wanted to escalate the conflict deliberately, and resulted in a series of clashes between Indonesian security forces and GAM combatants that took place soon after the Humanitarian Pause began.

The situation deteriorated as assassination became common, and this agreement failed to de-escalate the violence in Aceh. In response, Wahid issued Presidential Instruction No. 4/2001, the so-called *Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan dan Penegakan Hukum* (Operation for the Restoration of Security and Enforcement of the Law), and passed the law for “Special Autonomy” for Aceh in July 2001. The Special Autonomy law gained little support in Aceh because it did not provide for immediate provincial and gubernatorial elections, and did not clarify how Sharia law would be implemented in the province. Moreover, the law did not allow for the establishment of local political parties.<sup>193</sup> Wahid, therefore, failed to achieve a peaceful conflict resolution, and in fact the violence escalated. On July 23, 2001, President Abdurrahman Wahid had to step down due to his impeachment by the National Assembly (MPR), and allowed his vice president, Megawati Soekarnoputri, to succeed him.

#### ***d. Peace Settlement under President Megawati Sukarnoputri***

Megawati took a different step to address Aceh conflict; she signed Law No. 18/2001 on Aceh’s special autonomy in the hope that GAM would accept that, and abandon its demand for independence. Megawati also continued efforts to settle the

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<sup>190</sup> Aspinall and Crouch, *The Aceh Peace Process*, 16.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>192</sup> Stephen Sherlock, *Conflict in Aceh: A Military Solution?* (Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Group, 2003), 4.

<sup>193</sup> Sherlock, *Conflict in Aceh*, 4.

conflict through negotiation, and on December 9, 2002, the Indonesian representatives and GAM finally managed to sign the Cessation of Hostilities agreement (COHA). The main intention of the COHA was to bring about another ceasefire and at the same time to evaluate the law on Special Autonomy. But the agreement failed to put an end to the conflict; GAM refused to abandon their primary goal for full independence as indicated and resisted being disarmed. As a subsequent response to the failure of the peaceful settlement, the government enacted Presidential Decree No. 28/2003 on the Declaration of a State Emergency with the Status of Martial Law in Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam Province on 19 May 2003. The military operations in this period were accompanied by increasing allegations of human rights abuses. This was due to the fact that the operations still focused on the elimination of GAM. Again, the Megawati administration also failed to address the Acehnese grievances and bring lasting peace to Aceh.

*e. Peace Settlement under President S.B Yudhoyono*

The 2004 general election brought Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (also known as SBY) to power as the fifth Indonesian president. As the Coordinating Minister for Political and Security affairs in President Megawati's cabinet, he had worked to find ways to settle the conflict peacefully. On December 26, 2004, however, the tsunami that hit Aceh killed hundreds of thousands of people. Many believed that the massive disaster led the government of Indonesia and GAM back to the negotiating table to seek peace through non-violent methods. In addition to the tsunami, President SBY and Vice-President Jusuf Kalla, since their election in September 2004, had demonstrated a strong commitment to settle the Aceh conflict through a negotiated solution and with international support. GAM, on the other side, had shown its sincerity to conclude the armed struggle throughout the process. On August 15, 2005, in Helsinki, Finland, the government of Indonesia and GAM representative took a constructive initiative to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), and brought an end to nearly three decades of armed conflict in Aceh.

The peace agreement, brokered by the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) led by Finland's former president, Marti Ahtisaari, and was monitored by the member states of the European Union (EU) as well as five Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries. With strong support from the EU and five participating ASEAN countries, peace now returned to Aceh, and the Acehnese could exercise authority over its own affairs within the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. The agreement included a series of requirements of both parties to maintain peace. In exchange, the Indonesian government promised broad autonomy, the right to form local political parties, and local control over the revenues from Aceh's natural resources. GAM had to give up its armed struggle and hand over all its weapons. GAM committed itself publicly to becoming a local political party within six months of the enactment and dismantling as a rebel movement shortly thereafter. In July 2007, *Partai* GAM (GAM Party) was established by former GAM combatants, with the GAM flag as the party symbol. And yet, in spite of being protested as a violation of the Helsinki agreement, *Partai* GAM officially changed its name. In April 2008, *Partai* GAM became *Partai* Aceh (Aceh Party), and along with the other local parties, the Acehnese were now able to channel their political aspirations.

### **3. Aceh Post-Conflict Situation**

It is important to know the current situation in Aceh four years after the peace agreement was signed. I interviewed key figures in Aceh, such as the governor of Aceh himself, the regional military commander, who is a two-star general, as well as high and middle ranking military and police officers. These included former GAM members, members of NGOs, human rights and civil society groups in Aceh and Jakarta. In addition, I interviewed some scholars who were involved in Aceh's post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation. I also conducted interviews in Singapore, Banda Aceh and Jakarta, and communicated with some sources by telephone, text messaging and email. I also attended the international conference on Aceh's post-conflict situation

sponsored by a Singapore-based organization, the Asian Research Institute (ARI), from February 22–23, 2009. Some of interviewees are not identified by name or recorded for personal reasons.

Evidence of the successful political settlement to the prolonged and bloody conflict was when the former GAM leader Irwandi Yusuf and Muhammad Nazar of SIRA (Aceh People Independence Voice) were officially sworn in as the new governor and vice-governor of Aceh Province on 8 February 2007, pledging allegiance to the Republic of Indonesia. This was one example of the peaceful settlement of almost three decades of internal conflict in Indonesia that has worked well so far. However, due to the nature of the conflict in Aceh, factors that could hamper the peace processes remained. The signing of the Helsinki peace accord in 2005 has not freed the province from violence involving former rebels, as reports of attacks continue to escalate ahead of the general election that will be held on April 9, 2009. The sporadic incidents, low-level violence such as murders, shootings, and numerous grenade attacks, as well as criminal activities before and after the general election have to be addressed if peace is to be preserved in the long run. A recent report revealed that at least sixteen people were killed, and forty-seven people seriously injured in a series of attacks by unidentified gunmen between December 2008 and February 2009.<sup>194</sup>

Unfortunately, the situation could get worse, as the governor of Aceh depicted the relationship between the military and the local government is not too good.<sup>195</sup> This is due to the fact that many in the TNI are convinced that GAM still demands independence and has never changed its goals. GAM only changes its tactics; it used armed rebels to achieve its goals in the past, now it uses democratic means. Some believe that the GAM members that dissolved into the Aceh Party (PA) led by a former rebel, Muzakkir Manaf, continued to constitute a potential threat to the unity of the Republic. This is despite repeated public denials by the top leadership of PA, that have been posted in the local

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<sup>194</sup> The Jakarta Post, “Attack on the Rise in Aceh Prior to Elections,” the Jakarta Post (23 March 2009), <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/03/23/attacks-rise-aceh-prior-elections.html> (accessed March 27, 2009).

<sup>195</sup> Interview with the Governor of Aceh, Irwandi Yusuf on 25 February 2009 in Banda Aceh.



media, insisting that PA has a commitment to uphold the unity of Indonesian territory. The governor of Aceh himself acted on the side of the PA asking the Acehnese to vote PA in the coming election. He said that the PA is not a separatist party; it is legally established based upon the Indonesian Constitution.<sup>196</sup> But the evidence on the ground showed the opposite, some PA campaigners reportedly circulated leaflets stating that the PA was the only legitimate local party according to the MoU, and made its promises to a referendum on independence after being victorious in the April 2009 elections.<sup>197</sup>

According to Sidney Jones of the International Crisis Group (ICG), the military's fears are misplaced, despite the campaign rhetoric of some PA members. Jones expresses disbelief that the PA will use democratic means to achieve independence without hurting the Helsinki peace agreement.<sup>198</sup> But her suspicion is based on GAM's failure to dissolve itself, and its repeated use of the word "Merdeka" (independence) in its name, the rhetoric of many its members in the field, and its leaders still using GAM letterhead for correspondence.<sup>199</sup> The military sees this as evidence of GAM bad faith. The regional military commander, Major General Soenarko, said that GAM should abandon its goal to gain independence and to stop acting in bad faith, and then he believes that Aceh will be at peace.<sup>200</sup> The dissolution, however, is not explicitly specified in the MoU, but repeatedly demanded by the Indonesian side to the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM). The GAM leaders agreed to dismantle the organization "as soon as possible" meaning that GAM will have six months to transform itself into a political party.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Serambinews.com, "PA bukan Partai Separatis (Aceh Party is not Separatist Party)" <http://www.serambinews.com/news/pa-bukan-partai-separatis> (accessed March 21, 2009).

<sup>197</sup> The Jakarta Post, "Aceh Party denies seeking secession from Indonesia," (Jakarta, Jakartapost, 2009), <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/03/27/aceh-party-denies-seeking-secession-indonesia.html> (accessed March 29, 2009).

<sup>198</sup> Interview with Sidney Jones, the Senior Adviser of International Crisis Group (ICG), on March 5, 2009, in Jakarta.

<sup>199</sup> Hotli Simanjuntak, "Still 'mutual fear and loathing' between GAM, military: Report," the Jakarta post (24 March 2009), <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/03/24/still-%E2%80%98mutual-fear-and-loathing%E2%80%99-between-gam-military-report.html> (accessed March 27, 2009).

<sup>200</sup> Interview with Major General Soenarko, Chief of Kodam (Military Region Command), on February 24, 2009, in Banda Aceh.

<sup>201</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG), Update Briefing No.90, (Jakarta/Brussels, 2009), 7. Aspinall, *The Helsinki Agreement: A More Basis for Peace in Aceh?* (2009).

GAM leaders have no valid reason to postpone dissolving the organization after transforming GAM into a popular political party since its establishment on July 7, 2007 in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Indonesia. GAM, therefore, requires dissolution, and changing its name and its mission; it would, of course, remain a stakeholder in the implementation process as signatory of the Helsinki peace agreement. In line with the MoU's recognition of Aceh's incorporation into Indonesia, GAM is required to show its good will, and abandon its goal by publicly dissolving the organization.

A direct consequence of the mutual distrust, affecting the performance of the soldiers on the ground, between TNI and GAM tended to escalate over time. One example of this was a widely circulated text message on March 3, 2009 that claimed that a sub-district military commander, Lieutenant Erwin, and the ten men under his command pulled up and stomped some 400 PA flags in the sub-district of Simpang Keuramat, North Aceh, a GAM stronghold.<sup>202</sup> Erwin and six of his men were tried in an emergency court-martial in Aceh's second largest city, Lhokseumawe. He was accused of having given an order relating to removal of the flags. Although Lieutenant Erwin was finally court-martialed and sentenced to jail for fourteen days, similar cases may take place in the future.<sup>203</sup> The solution to this situation is better law enforcement, patience, employment, and targeted civil society efforts, meaning that the central government should place police at the forefront of handling Aceh's current situation, the impression on the ground was that the TNI is again dominating security operations.<sup>204</sup> On the other hand, the other possible spoilers could come from ex-GAM combatants since some of

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<sup>202</sup> A similar text messaging I received from the Governor of Aceh on March 3, 2009.

<sup>203</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG), 9. The ICG report in Update Briefing, "Indonesia: Deep Distrust in Aceh as Election Approach," is a good source for further reading about the current situation in Aceh province.

<sup>204</sup> Interview with Sidney Jones, Jakarta, March 5, 2009. In accordance with Sidney Jones's perspective, Lieutenant General Bambang Darmono, former the commander of the Indonesian military presence in Aceh from 2002–2005, in the interview with him, expressed that the military should be deployed in the last resort to handle potential conflict escalation in Aceh. He agreed that police should be the forefront in the law enforcement-related issues, not the military.

them still keep their weapons, the exact number of which remains unknown.<sup>205</sup> The governor of Aceh admitted that uncontrolled ex-combatants could be involved in criminal activities such as extortion and armed robberies. For example, a Singaporean ship was boarded on February 19, 2009 by a group of armed ex-combatants, and the captain was finally released after paying a ransom of Rp. 1 billion (\$100,000).<sup>206</sup>

### C. ANALYSIS

Since the GAM's declaration of independence in 1976 and before 1999, the international public did not pay attention to the conflict between the government of Indonesia and GAM. Most states do not support Aceh's bid for independence, as it would affect the stability of Indonesia and Southeast Asia in general. Therefore, GAM could not rely heavily upon armed struggle; its guerilla strategy was accompanied by a political strategy centered on the idea of internationalization and negotiations. After 1998, GAM concentrated its efforts on appealing to the world about the Aceh conflict through the internet in particular. The government, on the other hand, was concerned about the developing situation in Aceh that might lead to the internationalization of the conflict similar to the bitter experience of the separation of East Timor after the fall of Soeharto in 1998. Based on past experience where military options were not the best choice, the subsequent government combined its strategies and included the non-military approaches attempted by the post-Soeharto era to solve the problem. During the Megawati era, her close relationship with the military strengthened her policy on Aceh to be stronger and tougher. The next government exercised the more constructive conflict resolution, non-violence options to reduce civilian casualties.

However, after the 2005 Helsinki peace agreement put an end to the conflict, the situation was not automatically calm in Aceh. Low intensity violence perpetrated by unidentified people remained a central issue especially in the days before the general election on April 9, 2009. The military was worried that the Aceh Party (PA), the party

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<sup>205</sup> Interview with the Governor of Aceh on February 25, 2009.

<sup>206</sup> ICG Asia Briefing No. 90, *Indonesia: Deep Distrust in Aceh as Election Approach*.

formed by former GAM combatants, would win control of local legislatures and then challenge the central government's authority. The PA is, on the contrary, worried about interference from the government. How will the government and GAM maintain their commitment to preserve peace in Aceh?

I will also analyze the political strategies employed by both sides before and after the 2005 peace agreement, and especially in the 2009 general election. The election will be very important for the future of Aceh because the military remains convinced that GAM, the local government, and local political parties will be potential threats to Indonesia's territorial integrity. The military believed that GAM members have not abandoned their commitment to independence and will use local elections to pursue that goal, the goal of total independence. Indeed, GAM has no chance to gain full independence by either military or political means, or a combination of the two without hurting the 2005 Helsinki peace agreement.

### **1. The Strategy of GAM**

The GAM's efforts to internationalize its struggle did not exist until 1999. From exile, Hasan Tiro attempted to lobby for support in the United States and the European Union, but without adequate impact. He then tried to attract attention from the Islamic world, and only Libya in 1985 gave its assistance through military training. Although GAM wanted to "internationalize" the Aceh problem, this time GAM failed to gain international pressure on the GoI, that it subsequently pursued after the collapse of the Soeharto regime in 1998. Tiro's subsequent efforts to lobby the United Nations had a smaller impact than he expected. Although some human rights organizations were concerned with the Aceh situation, Tiro failed to gain wider international support. The GAM strategy of internationalization changed dramatically following the fall of Soeharto in May 1998. Soeharto's successor, President Habibie, made the phenomenal decision to approach the East Timor conflict by offering either integration or total separation to the East Timorese. GAM leaders were inspired by the government's policy toward East Timor; they saw this as a new path to independence for Aceh. Since then, GAM leaders

have concentrated their efforts for referendum; by doing this, they require international peace negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations. In order to gain widespread public attention, both nationally and internationally, GAM deliberately made the situation more destructive by increasing its armed activities and attacking security forces during that period.

The bitter consequences of the East Timor conflict, due to the gross human rights violations committed by the military, drew international public condemnation of the government of Indonesia. Learning from this situation, GAM began depicting the Indonesian security forces as human rights violators. The atrocities of the military and police were posted on the Internet in the hopes of gaining the same impact as in East Timor in 1991, when the military committed human rights abuses by shooting some 200 civilians, and led to the independence of East Timor in 2002 following a referendum in 1999.

Based on past experiences in which the international public condemned the government of Indonesia's way of handling an internal armed conflict, the government attempted to pursue a more constructive conflict resolution through peace negotiations. As previously discussed, two peace attempts failed to bring lasting peace to Aceh. Both parties had been known to violate promises before, but the 2005 Helsinki agreement has a brighter future than the previous ones. What makes the Helsinki agreement different? Many believe that the strategy of GAM after the peace agreement was signed on August 15, 2005 was to achieve its hidden agenda: independence and total separation from the republic. The peace agreement was only the first stage of a two-stage process. The next is the local elections of the executive and legislative councils, which are both institutions projected to gain the vast majority of votes in these election in order to proceed to its agenda. Even if GAM is able to gain the majority in the local elections, it cannot advance its agenda for independence without violating the 2005 Helsinki peace agreement. The independence of Aceh was not planned in the Helsinki agreement. Sidney Jones of the Crisis Group (ICG) expressed her disbelief that GAM can achieve its

goal by using democratic means for total independence.<sup>207</sup> GAM tried to bend the term “self-government” as “self-determination” as is stated in the UN charter. The term “self-government” is actually similar to “autonomy,” or “*hak mengatur rumah tangga*” (the Indonesian translation of the Dutch term “*zelfbestuur*”) and is currently implemented in Aceh based upon the 2005 agreement.

If the agreement is violated by either side, the international community would not give its support. On GAM’s side, it is impossible to disregard international public opinion, and the violation of MoU would harm its reputation. If GAM still pursues the goal of total independence, both by using democratic means and through armed struggle, it will still be difficult to achieve due to the fact that there was no adequate international support for this idea. The government of Indonesia, on the other hand, can use all means necessary to defend its territory from separation, both military as well as political, but now with wider international support. This is the government’s greatest strength, as according to international law, it has legal right to maintain its sovereignty and to defend the unity and integrity of Indonesian territory. Hence both military and democratic means for GAM will still have difficulty achieving its goal. The GAM leaders, therefore, have to realize that the goal of a win-win solution is to manage the dispute and that the 2005 peace agreement is a constructive resolution to bring peace to Aceh.

## **2. The Strategy of the Government**

After the Soeharto regime was toppled, President Habibie began withdrawing non-organic military forces from Aceh and declared the end of the ‘Region of Military Operation’ (DOM) era in 1998. The commander-in-chief, General Wiranto, followed Habibie’s decision by sending a public apology for the trauma affected by military operations in the past. From the strategies employed to address the Aceh conflict, we can see significant differences between the Soeharto era and the era of democratic reform. The government realized that the conflict could not be solved by using military options alone; Aceh needed a more constructive resolution. For example, in 2001, the non-

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<sup>207</sup> Interview with Sidney Jones in Jakarta on March 5, 2009.

military option of special autonomy was implemented in the province by President Wahid's administration. Subsequent governments under Megawati and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) also attempted negotiations with GAM and shifted the approaches from military and legal approaches within Aceh to diplomatic and legal efforts to deal with GAM leaders in exile.<sup>208</sup>

President Wahid invited the Henry Dunant Center (HDC) to come to Aceh shortly after he became president. The December 9, 2002, Cessation of Hostility Agreement (COHA) brokered by HDC was not really a peace agreement. It was designed to halt the violence and bring a peaceful end to the conflict in Aceh. The Wahid administration's strategy to reduce violence in Aceh was through dialogue in the hope that GAM would give up the armed struggle and accept special autonomy, but it was opposed by the military and many members of the political elite. The reason for the disagreement was that the bilateral negotiations would impact the recognition of GAM as a separatist organization with a status equal to that of the government of Indonesia and could lead to the separation of Aceh after putting Aceh under the international spotlight. Despite the fact that the implementation of the special autonomy for Aceh did not impact the people's lives significantly, the Acehnese's grievances remained unaddressed. There was no clear distinction between special autonomy and life under centralization. These issues were crucial stumbling blocks to resolving the conflict through non-military approaches. As a consequence, the government tended to pursue military options whenever the negotiations did not have the expected result.

Many criticized that military options brought tactical gains for the military but generated misery for the Acehnese and in fact tended to broaden political support for GAM. Another criticism was that the Indonesia security forces had a narrow parochial sense toward handling the separatist movement; they had to do no more than defend the territory. GAM, on the other hand, did not have the capacity to take Aceh by force. For that reason, the security forces should enhance the COIN capacity by using a better

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<sup>208</sup> Kirsten E. Schulze, "Strategy and the Aceh Conflict," in *Verandah of Violence*, ed. by Anthony Reid (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006), 259.

strategy of COIN, better skill and disciplined soldiers, the know-how to win the people's hearts and minds, and much improved intelligence capabilities with the full support of the government. The bitter lessons from the past due to the soldiers lack of discipline, which was characterized by the widespread series of human rights violations, including torture, kidnapping, extrajudicial killings, disappearances and the like, had to be taken into consideration. Instead of defeating the insurgent groups, the security forces failed to win the heart and minds of the Acehnese. The non-military options should have been implemented at this stage, and the security forces had to bear in mind that the center of gravity of this conflict was laid on the population, not on the territory.

#### **D. SUMMARY**

The essential component of the Aceh conflict as described on Table 2 (Conflict component and destructiveness), such as ethno-nationalist identity, unaddressed grievances due to the exploitation of the natural resources, and human rights violations as well as economic marginalization became the primary causes of the conflict escalation in Aceh. But when the Acehnese goal shifted from total independence to seeking cooperation through negotiation, the conflict was gradually reduced. The conflict also tended to be more constructive after the government and GAM leaders agreed to limit the use of violence, and believed that non-coercive means were the best way to achieve peace in Aceh.

Kriesberg argues that ethnic or other identities can serve as a basis for mobilization and organization to mobilize the Acehnese to armed resistance in the form of the Islamic organization of Darul Islam (DI). The devoutly Islamic character of the Acehnese is a key element in nationalist representation of Acehnese identity. Acehnese also believed that Aceh is identical with Islam on which they frequently pride themselves.<sup>209</sup> In addition to their Islamic identity, the Acehnese have formed a different starting point than many other Indonesians. Their past glory as a major regional military

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<sup>209</sup> Edward Aspinall, "Modernity, history, and ethnicity," in *Autonomy and Distintegration in Indonesia*, ed. by Damien Kingsburry and Harry Aveling (New York: Routledge, 2003), 142.



power, an Islamic educational center, and their resistance to the Dutch, generated a unique sense of community. The DI leaders believed that the Islamic identity of the Acehnese could help generate resources that might be used to drive the Aceh people to achieve their collective goal to establish an Islamic state. Therefore, when the central government did not adopt Islam as a base of the state ideology, the Acehnese felt betrayed and that their strong commitment to the revolution was not properly rewarded, and that led to the armed rebellion. When DI was finally crushed by the government in 1962, GAM emerged and brought their own goal. GAM clearly represented Aceh's claim to independence, not just in historical terms as DI claimed, but also in terms of racial exclusivity, and at least in regard to the Javanese.<sup>210</sup> The result was not surprising. GAM attempted to drive out those Javanese migrants who were considered to be the main beneficiaries of the development of the Aceh province.

Great inequality in profit-sharing of the natural resources revenue tends to become a grievance. Kriesberg believes that social conflict emerges from having a grievance, and by the groups who consider themselves to be suffering injustices. A sense of grievance can arise from economic marginalization, and factors like this generate the strength of the grievances. For example, the Acehnese agreed to what was desirable, but they had less than they should had, while the Javanese migrants had more. In this regard, economic marginalization has played a main role in creating Acehnese resistance against non-Acehnese and the central government. The degree of destructiveness, for example, increased when the Javanese became a key target of GAM's physical attacks.

To reduce the Acehnese grievances, GAM formulated a goal directed at reducing them. GAM leaders reiterated their demand for separation and vowed to use all means necessary to realize their goal of total independence. Both GoI and GAM tended to use military force, and as a result, the destructive strategies employed by both sides claimed more than ten thousand lives and violated the human rights of the population. Aceh demanded self-determination while Indonesia insisted on the integrity of the unitary of

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<sup>210</sup> Damien Kingsbury, "Diversity in Unity," in *Autonomy and Disintegration in Indonesia*, ed. by Damien Kingsbury and Harry Aveling (New York: Routledge, 2003), 102.

the Republic. After the collapse of the Soeharto regime, the strategy of a purely military action shifted to one more constructive and democratic in nature. The Habibie administration, through passing laws on decentralization, gave Aceh and other provinces greater control over natural resources. President Wahid initiated the negotiation process with GAM, and brokered by the Swiss Henri Dunant Center (HDC), and yet failed. The hard line elements within the TNI kept pressing to employ a full-scale military solution to the deteriorated situation in Aceh. Before his impeachment, President Wahid attempted to appease his political opponent and gain support from the military. He signed Presidential Decree No. 4, 2001 on Aceh, including special autonomy and political dialogue. The decree, however, failed to stop the violence in Aceh. After the fall of Wahid, who was replaced by Megawati Soekarnoputri, her administration continued to pursue a political approach. As a result, a Cessation of Hostilities was signed in December 2002. The Megawati administration also implemented special autonomy to Aceh to calm this province, but unfortunately, when the conflict escalated, the military operations remained the answer. In fact, in terms of numbers, President Megawati sent in the largest military operation since the East Timorese invasion of 1975.<sup>211</sup>

The methods to solve the problem in Aceh changed considerably after the tsunami hit Aceh, and led the degradation of the conflict. There were at least two major factors that contributed to the conflict de-escalation in Aceh besides the shift of strategies. The first was that the Acehnese had suffered the most as a direct result of the conflict, especially in the period from mid-2003 and following the tsunami at the end of 2004, which marked de-escalation in the conflict. GAM suffered great damage from both the military and the tsunami, and it lost a considerable amount of its infrastructure. The government of Indonesia and GAM both realized that it was necessary to halt the conflict due to the fact that it was impossible for Aceh to be in a conflict while Acehnese province needed massive rebuilding after the tsunami. The second main factor was the newly elected president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Jusuf Kalla as his vice-president who both had a strong commitment to resolving the conflict as part of their

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<sup>211</sup> Kingsbury, *Peace in Aceh*, 5.

policies to continue pursuing a peace settlement for the Aceh separatist conflict. The government finally addressed the Acehnese problems by considering the Acehnese a strong Islamic identity, as well as their political and economic grievances to discover the goals and methods needed to raise the prospect of a constructive resolution and eventual peace in Aceh.

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## V. CONCLUSION

### A. LESSONS LEARNED AND A PEACEFUL SOLUTION FOR THE ACEH CONFLICT

After three decades of conflict, the government of Indonesia (GoI) and GAM leaders finally signed a peace agreement in 2005. The agreement marked the end of a prolonged and bitter war. In the history of Aceh, from the sultanate until its integration into the Republic of Indonesia, the Acehnese demonstrated their never-give-up attitude. Until the end of the Dutch rule during World War II, the Acehnese were never fully pacified. After the Japanese surrender in 1945, many Acehnese joined the anti-colonial forces fighting the Dutch attempts to regain control in the newly established Republic. Although the Acehnese initially rejected incorporation into a united Indonesia, they finally accepted the status of an autonomous state within a federal Indonesia in 1949. The Acehnese, however, rebelled in the early 1950s, following the central government's decision to reject Islam as a state ideology. Since then, Aceh has never been pacified by the central government. Although the New Order government did a very effective job of controlling most of Aceh for most of time it was in power, this does not mean that the root causes of the Acehnese grievances were properly addressed. In fact, during the Soeharto administration, the civilian casualties mounted. Despite this, the New Order's nation-building project was generally successful, as Miller argues; the growth of separatism in East Timor, Papua and Aceh became broader phenomena and led to the loss of central state power, authority and legitimacy that accompanied regime change in 1998, marking it with the fall of the New Order regime.<sup>212</sup>

The various policies had been taken either military or politically. As previously discussed using McCormick's Diamond model and Kriesberg's constructive resolution, we can see from the past that the Acehnese were unable to be conquered by relying heavily on military might. The harsher the government treatment of the Acehnese, the

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<sup>212</sup> Michael Ann Miller, *Rebellion and Reform in Indonesia* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 7.

more resistance it would face, and as a result, the conflict became intractable and more difficult to resolve. Some believe that military operations under the 2003 martial law succeeded in reducing GAM's military strength, and thus forced GAM to the negotiation table. One of the common perceptions was that the military operations (the 2003–4 *Operasi Terpadu*) made GAM leaders more willing to negotiate after the tsunami. But, past experience suggests that military operations against GAM only forced the rebels to temporarily retreat, and GAM had an ability to make another comeback with greater popular support. The 1999 massive demonstration in Banda Aceh showed us that the Acehnese supported GAM's idea for total independence through a referendum, or in other words, if the military once again defeated GAM militarily, there would be no guarantee that GAM would not reemerge later in time. In fact, the GAM leader, Hasan Tiro, is living in exile, making it difficult to defeat GAM militarily. GAM's willingness to negotiate, however, as Schulze argues, was the combination of both political and military approaches.<sup>213</sup> The 2003 martial law, with full international support, severely blew GAM's confidence of its strategy of internationalization to support its separatist cause. The massive disaster of the tsunami also forced GAM to declare a unilateral ceasefire to allow international humanitarian aids to enter the province. The Indonesian government, on the other side, under the leadership of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Vice-President Yusuf Kalla, who had a strong commitment to resolving the Aceh problem peacefully, saw the window of opportunity. Indeed, the tsunami alone did not end the deep mutual hostilities between the belligerents, but it had an indirect impact allowing both sides to reassess their own positions, and in fact, the involvement of the international mediating bodies, and especially Marti Atisari, and made the peace settlement possible.

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<sup>213</sup> Kirsten E. Schulze, *Mission Not So Impossible: The AMM and the Transition from Conflict to Peace in Aceh, 2005–2006* (Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 2007), 3–4.

The McCormick model suggests the Acehnese as the center of gravity, meaning that to win the war, the government, and especially the military, has to win the hearts and minds of the people. The military apparently ignored the fact that the excessive use of force could switch the preferences of the population. To many Acehnese, the Indonesian army was considered the enemy since the military operations during the DOM (Military Operation Zone) period from the 1980s to 1998 generated a large number of civilian casualties. Although in 1998, the Habibie administration and the military leaders apologized for the excess and promised to withdraw all combat troops from the province, the wounds remained open. The government repeated the same mistakes; the Wahid and Megawati administrations authorized military offensives in the province following the failure of the negotiations. It was clear that military operations were not the solution for the Aceh conflict since the military was unable to win the people's hearts and minds. The root causes of the conflict were not military matters, but economic, social, and political as well as various injustice policies. In this case, I agree that the Aceh problem was not a military problem. But, I am not saying that military operations are not important, but, that the Aceh conflict cannot be overcome solely by the use of military force.

Kriesberg also suggests that the conflict can be solved through constructive resolution. The win-win situation basis, as adopted in the 2005 Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding, was an example that a prolonged and intractable conflict such as the Aceh conflict could be a good template for any government in the world as to how an internal conflict should be concluded. Once the peace agreement has been achieved, our next job is to maintain and preserve it. This is not an easy task, and in the case of the Aceh conflict, there are still possible for spoilers to undermine the peace agreement. Because of the failure of the earlier peace talks, many critics responded skeptically that the 2005 Helsinki peace agreement could put an end to the Aceh conflict. Nonetheless, the talks succeeded, and it is now four years since its terms have been implemented.

As mentioned earlier, a series of peace talks brokered by a Swiss-based NGO broke down eventually, and both the government and GAM blamed each other for the

violations. The main causes of the failure of these talks, as many scholars identified, were two issues. The government insisted that Aceh remain a province of Indonesia. GAM leaders, on the other hand, considered that special autonomy only as a starting point and therefore they still pursued Aceh's independence. As noted in the previous chapters, GAM was using the ceasefire to strengthen its position by recruiting and fundraising.<sup>214</sup> As a result, in 2003, President Megawati announced a military emergency status for the Aceh province, and the military launched a massive military operation in this province. As a consequence, civilian casualties were widespread.

How then can the 2005 Helsinki MoU guarantee lasting peace in Aceh? The analysis in the previous sections suggests that both parties have learned from the failures of the past, and that the peace agreement is a win-win situation. The peace in Aceh became possible because the 2005 peace agreement accommodated almost all of the demands of GAM leaders. The MoU is comprised of five sections: (a) the governing of Aceh; (b) human rights; (c) amnesty; (d) security arrangement; and (e) the establishment of the Aceh Monitoring Mission. The government of Indonesia fulfilled almost all the demands of the GAM's leaders, except foreign affairs, external defense, national security and fiscal matters. What if the GAM leaders still pursue Aceh's independence? Although some GAM leaders remained highly committed to the independence, (as Governor Irwandi admitted), since 2005 they have found themselves in a better situation (compared to when they were forced to live in the jungles and mountains). On the other hand, the government, and especially the military, must remember that military measures cannot stand alone; they have to be combined with other actions (such as law enforcement, humanitarian aid, strengthening local government and economic improvement) to address the Acehese grievances.

The crucial political point, as many scholars have pointed out, was the transformation of GAM into a local political party and its willingness to abandon its struggle for an independent Aceh. In return, the government provided amnesty to all

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<sup>214</sup> Edward Aspinall, *The Helsinki Agreement: A More Promising Basis for Peace in Aceh?* (Washington D.C, East-West Center Washington, 2005), 4.



GAM combatants. Additionally, the agreement included the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the withdrawal of non-organic TNI troops, as well as the release of hundreds of political prisoners. Even with the successful conclusion of the 2005 peace agreement, Aceh is not automatically immune from the failures (they occurred in the past), and there are still some potential obstacles. Those who oppose the peace agreements said that the government gave GAM too many concessions. Since the beginning of the peace efforts, some hard-line military officers (as well as political elites) argued that the 2005 Helsinki peace deal internationalized the case. This echoed claims to the detriment of state sovereignty that the “loss” of East Timor occurred after being internationalized. Of course, Aceh province is different from that of East Timor. The annexation of East Timor by Indonesia was not recognized by the United Nations. East Timor, therefore, was never the part of Indonesia’s territory, since it had been occupied by Portuguese, while Aceh was undisputedly under Dutch occupation. Indonesia as it is known today, occupies the territory that was formerly the Dutch East Indies. In addition, many in the TNI are convinced that GAM is still committed to full independence rather than autonomy within Indonesia.

The problem now is not secessionist but mainly economic in nature since there is a question about which side benefits from this situation and which one does not. This is the greatest challenge for the government, to generate the best policies for the future of Aceh. Therefore, in order to maintain peace, all parties require guarding against the potential for spoilers on both sides to undermine the peace agreement. After the GAM leaders won the local election in 2006, lucrative patronage networks have emerged; jobs and contracts have gone to the winners, however, unemployment amongst ex-combatants remains high, and this has contributed to incidents involving illegal activities such as extortion, robbery, and illegal logging.<sup>215</sup> On the other hand, some anti-GAM think that economic benefits should go to people who had been loyal to the unitary state of Indonesia. Despite all the shortcomings of the peace process, it is undeniable that the 2005 Helsinki peace agreement has produced the best solution for Aceh problems.

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<sup>215</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG), Asia Briefing No. 139, *Aceh: Post-conflict complications*, i.

## B. RECOMMENDATION

The lessons from the past indicate that the policies of the government toward Aceh are often damaged by the broken promises of the central government in implementing the Special Autonomy law, and then state repression continues. Since the promises were unfulfilled, the unjust implementation of economic policies and the continuing impunity of the human rights abusers contributed to the sense of grievance and alienation of the locals. The democratic era suggests the use of the military force only as a last resort. Unfortunately, the local police have been relegated to a minor role and are ineffective due to a lack of training, insufficient numbers, having family ties with GAM members as they are largely recruited from the locals, economic collusion, and even fear.<sup>216</sup> The government should take these issues into consideration. If the police are ineffective at doing their jobs maintaining order and law enforcement, this will encourage the military to take over the police position. In a democratic environment, the police should be the dominant security force to maintain public order, and not the military. As Heidux put it, democracy fosters peace, or at least brings about more peaceful ‘civilian’ policies in dealing with civil contention and internal rebellion.<sup>217</sup> For those reasons, the police have to demonstrate their ability to investigate and prosecute all the perpetrators, and bring them to justice, as the problems in Aceh are mostly in connection with criminal activities.

The recent development in Aceh province that is being widely reported by the media also suggests that democracy has the reduced levels of internal conflict and strengthened Indonesia’s territorial integrity. The decentralization and autonomy do not fuel separatism, in the case of the Aceh province; people can manage their own affairs at the local level and contribute to regional peace and security. There is no clear indication that the Aceh Party (PA) will pursue a referendum on independence after winning the

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<sup>216</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG), Asia Briefing No. 90, *Indonesia: Deep Distrust in Aceh as Election approach*, 1.

<sup>217</sup> Felix Heidux, “Two Sides of the Same Coin? Separatism and democratization in post-Suharto Indonesia,” in *Democratization in Post-Suharto Indonesia*, ed. by Marco Bunte and Andreas Ufen (New York: Routledge, 2009), 296.

local election as the PA cannot gain independence through a referendum without damaging the 2005 peace agreement. This means that the Indonesia's territorial integrity is not as fragile as it was once thought to be. The result of the recent election in Aceh demonstrated convincingly that a plural society in Indonesia does not threaten nation-building, destabilize society, or lead to separatism.<sup>218</sup> This is in contrast to local military suspicions that the PA attempted to gain independence through a democratic fashion. The evidence on the ground, according to the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and e-Card (Community Research for Aceh Development), showed that the PA won a major victory with votes ranging between 43.8 percent, while the Democratic Party, the second position, had won around 14.3 percent.<sup>219</sup> The PA is established by the former rebels and the Democratic Party is founded by Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the current president of Indonesia, who along with Jusuf Kalla, the vice president is widely known to have a strong commitment to the Aceh peace process. This is clear evidence that the Aceh people give credit to the government for its role in bringing peace to Aceh by voting for Yudhoyono's party. Consequently the military should not interpret the GAM's victory in the local election as separatist in nature, but rather as an act for the full implementation of the Law of the Governing of Aceh (Law 11/2006), which is the reflection of the 2005 Helsinki agreement.

The McCormick's Diamond model and the Kriesberg's constructive conflict resolution are good models for examining the Aceh conflict. To draw lessons from the past as well as to anticipate similar cases, which will likely take place in the future for either the Indonesian government in particular, or any government in the world, in general. The root causes of the conflict in Aceh were clearly economic imbalance, political injustice, and deprivation of the people, as well as ignorance of local values. The situation was then politically exploited by the secessionist leaders, demanding total

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<sup>218</sup> Michael Vatikiotis, "RI's elections: the regional divided," *The Jakarta Post* March 22, 2009. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/04/22/ri039s-elections-the-regional-dividend.html> (accessed April 26, 2009).

<sup>219</sup> Kompas.com, "NDI: Kemenangan Partai Aceh 43.8 persen (NDI: Aceh Party (PA) won 43.8 percent)," March 26, 2009. <http://www.kompas.com/read/xml/2009/04/20/17141483/ndi.kemenangan.partai.aceh.438.persen> (accessed April 20, 2009).

separation from the sovereign nation. In the case of Indonesia, the lessons learned from the past suggest that military operations were not the answer since the fundamental causes of the Acehese grievances were not properly solved. Today, the situation has changed dramatically, the democratic environment recommends that the military will be deployed as a last resort. On the other hand, GAM leaders must fully understand that their efforts to separate from the Republic of Indonesia by any fashion, either democratic or non-democratic means that an armed rebellion will fail. No single country supports GAM's demand for independence; therefore GAM leaders must be realistic and work within the democratic state of Indonesia. So, it is clear that the 2005 Helsinki peace agreement is the best solution for the Aceh problem.

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